

INCIDENT IN ATKINSON: The Arrest and Trial of Israel Dammon

by Bruce Weaver

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For more than a century, Seventh-day Adventists have relied unquestioningly on Ellen G. White's personal account of her first, postdisappointment travels (first published in 1860) for their understanding of her initial calling and her earliest ministry.¹

In a personal letter to J.N. Loughborough in 1874, Mrs. White describes how she spent the winter/spring of 1845 traveling from town to town, primarily in Maine, fighting the various forms of fanaticism that preoccupied those Millerites who (following the disappointments of 1843 and 1844) still refused to believe that God had not shared His timetable with them.²

However, recently resurrected newspaper accounts of a February 1845 weekend incident in Atkinson, Maine, involving Ellen Harmon, James White, Dorinda Baker, Israel Dammon, and others, call into question the reliability of Ellen White's autobiographical sketches.³

While Mrs. White's retrospective of her earliest travels emphasizes her fanaticism-fighting role, she also frequently dwells upon startling miracles that she says either attended her ministry or that took place in its presence. Mrs. White's three-page, published account of the arrest and trial of Israel Dammon⁴ is so remarkable that, while reading it over in March of 1986, it occurred to me that some specific contemporary reference to it must have survived in the New England newspapers—especially since it involved the police and the courts.

My research was soon and richly rewarded. It turned up the earliest existing eyewitness accounts of Ellen Harmon in vision—accounts included as part of sworn courtroom testimony regarding the activities that led to Dammon's arrest. The most historically significant find was an article in the 7 March 1845 *Piscataquis Farmer* under the heading "Trial of Elder I. Dammon." This Dover, Maine, weekly newspaper provided a 124-column-inch abridgement of the court reporter's transcript of Dammon's February 17 and 18 arraignment and trial.

Ellen Harmon's presence at the arrest of Dammon, and references at his trial to her behavior during the activities that led to his arrest, make this document particularly fascinating to Adventists. Fascination turns to concern, however, when Mrs. White's account of the affair is compared with that of the witnesses at the trial. But before making those comparisons it is necessary to establish context and to read the documents in question.

"Misty, snowy, and hail[ing]"

Ellen Harmon left her Portland, Maine, home in January 1845 and travelled by sleigh with her brother-in-law, Samuel Foss, to visit her sisters in Poland.⁵ She had experienced one vision in December of 1844 as well as a "call" to travel and share her vision with other Maine Millerites.⁶

An early victim among Andrews University seminary graduate students of the Glacier View era, Bruce Weaver is a field instructor for the copy division of Canon USA. He writes from Greensboro, North Carolina.

The great disappointment was nearly three months past, and the conservative New England populous could not understand why Millerism had outlived the bitter disappointments of 1843 and 1844. Even before Christ's failure to appear many believed that there were "arguments enough in favor of holy living without resorting to the possibility of the speedy end of the world for motives with which to address men."⁷

While most Millerites quietly rejoined the mainstream denominations and society as a whole, small pockets of fanatical true believers were scattered throughout the northeast. Some of them, in Ellen Harmon's home town of Portland, worshipped "with propriety of conduct . . . at Beethoven Hall."⁸ The meetings of others (attended by Miss Harmon), who met almost exclusively in private homes, were characterized by the "holy" salutation kiss, loud shouting and singing, physical prostrations, promiscuous (mixed) footwashing, multiple baptisms by immersion, odd exhibitions of voluntary humility (i.e., crawling, barking), and the presentations of a few (mostly female) visionaries.⁹

But it was the no-work policy advocated by a number of leading Adventist extremists that most attracted them to municipal authorities. Piscataquis County was the first to bring serious civil intervention to the fanatical Millerites of Maine. This precedent was soon followed by arrests, trials, and imprisonments or guardianships in Orrington, Bangor, Paris, Norway, Poland, Woodstock, and Portland.¹⁰

Ellen Harmon moved continuously among these Adventist extremists, and it is likely that she narrowly avoided arrest in Orrington by fleeing the scene.¹¹ And it is possible that she was arrested—along with Joseph Turner—at Poland in April 1845 (see below, "Was Ellen Harmon arrested?").¹² But there is no question about Ellen Harmon's presence during and involvement with the incident in Atkinson that led to the arrest of Israel Dammon.

The following paragraphs from the second volume of *Spiritual Gifts* (pp.40-42) contain Ellen White's only account of the February 1845 incident in Atkinson.

Ellen White's account

From Exeter we went to Atkinson. One night [February 15] I was shown something that I did not understand. It was to this effect, that we were to have a trial of our faith. The next day, which was the first day of the week, while I was speaking, two men looked into the window. We were satisfied of their object. They entered and rushed past me to Eld. Damman [sic]. The Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, and his strength was taken away, and he fell to the floor helpless. The officer cried out, "In the name of the State of Maine, lay hold of this man." Two seized his arms, and two his feet, and attempted to drag him from the room. They would move him a few inches only, and then rush out of the house. The power of God was in that room, and the servants of God with their countenances lighted up with his glory, made no resistance. The efforts to take Eld. D. were often repeated with the same effect. The men could not endure the power of God, and it was a relief to them to rush out of the house. Their

number increased to twelve, still Eld. D. was held by the power of God about forty minutes, and not all the strength of those men could move him from the floor where he lay helpless. At the same moment we all felt that Eld. D. must go; that God had manifested his power for his glory, and that the name of the Lord would be further glorified in suffering him to be taken from our midst. And those men took him up as easily as they would take up a child, and carried him out.

After Eld. D. was taken from our midst he was kept in a hotel, and guarded by a man who did not like his office. He said that Eld. D. was singing, and praying, and praising the Lord all night, so that he could not sleep, and he would not watch over such a man. No one wished the office of guarding him, and he was left to go about the village as he pleased, after promising that he would appear for trial. Kind friends invited him to share their hospitalities. At the hour of trial Eld. D. was present. A lawyer offered his services. The charge brought against Eld. D. was, that he was a disturber of the peace. Many witnesses were brought to sustain the charge, but they were at once broken down by the testimony of Eld. D.'s acquaintances present, who were called to the stand. There was much curiosity to know what Eld. D. and his friends believed, and he was asked to give them a synopsis of his faith. He then told them in a clear manner his belief from the Scriptures. It was also suggested that they sung curious hymns, and he was asked to sing one. There were quite a number of strong brethren present who had stood by him in the trial, and they joined with him in singing.

"When I was down in Egypt's land,

I heard my Saviour was at hand," &c.

Eld. D. was asked if he had a spiritual wife. He told them he had a lawful wife, and he could thank God that she had been a very spiritual woman ever since his acquaintance with her. The cost of court, I think, was thrown upon him, and he was released.

Newspaper accounts and other records provide additional context for the incident which Mrs. White described with such economy.

Saturday evening, 15 February 1845, found a number of disappointed Millerites (probably fifty or sixty) gathered "at the house of James Ayer, Jr., in the southwest part" of the small eastern Maine town of Atkinson.¹³ Nearly nine inches of snow had already fallen at nearby Bangor that month. The Bangor meteorologist described that Sabbath

as "misty, snowy, and hail[ing]." The high temperature for the day was 33 F, but it was 18 F by nine o'clock that evening.¹⁴ The visitors—more than a score of whom had arrived by sleigh from other towns such as Exeter, Garland, and Orrington—were groping for meaning in their disappointment.¹⁵ Although the Ayer household was alive with warm worshippers, nearby Dead Stream or one of its tributaries¹⁶ would be the site of at least two icy baptisms later that night.¹⁷

The meeting was presided over by a former sea captain from Exeter, Israel Dammon,¹⁸ and featured two visionaries (Miss Dorinda Baker of Orrington and Miss Ellen Harmon of Portland) as well as Elders Hall, White, and Wood.¹⁹

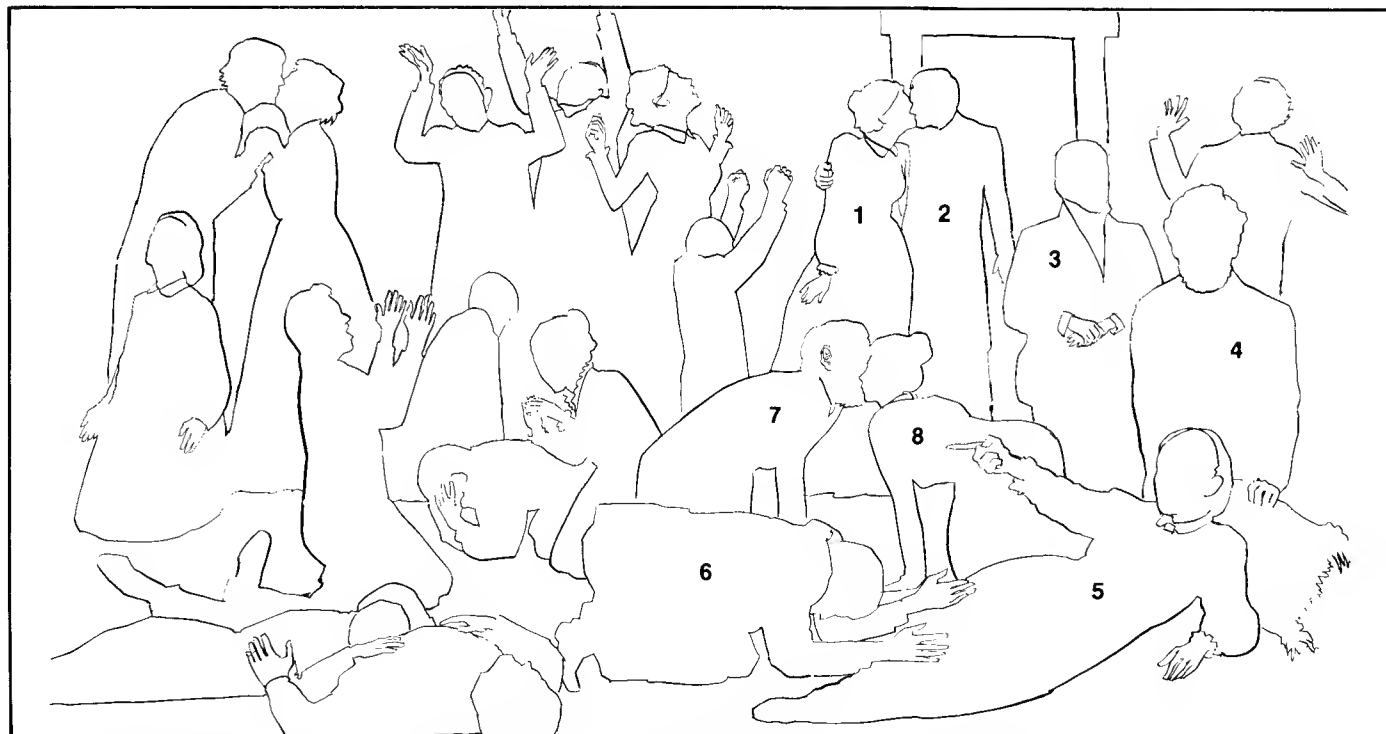
Prosecution witness William Crosby, a thirty-seven-year-old attorney²⁰ who attended the Saturday night meeting, described it in court two days later:

They would at times all be talking at once, halloing at the top of their voices. . . . There was a woman on the floor who lay on her back with a pillow under her head; she would occasionally arouse up and tell a vision which she said was revealed to her. . . . By spells it was the most noisy assembly I ever attended—there was no order or regularity, nor anything that resembled any other meeting I ever attended. . . .²¹

It may be useful to say about the full report from the *Piscataquis Farmer* which follows that its publisher, George V. Edes, was a fifty-eight-year-old justice of the peace.²² His civil appointment may explain why he assigned a volunteering layman to abridge the trial transcript for the *Farmer's* readers. But it also suggests the reason that so much space was given to its coverage in his paper.

A typical Maine newspaper of the period consisted of four pages, half of which usually contained public notices and advertisements for patent medicines. It was highly unusual for news items to exceed one column in length. Only speeches by the president of the United States or other important national figures claimed the amount of space allotted to the Dammon trial—seven long columns.

The entire *Piscataquis Farmer* report is reproduced below. All material appearing within brackets has been added for clarification, and some cosmetic editorial corrections have been made for easier reading. My commentary on the incident and the documents that illuminate it resumes at the conclusion of the *Farmer* report.



1 Dorinda Baker, 2 ??, 3 Wm. C. Crosby, 4 James White, 5 Ellen Harmon, 6 Joel Doore, 7 Israel Dammon, 8 Mrs. George S. Woodbury.



TRIAL OF ELDER I. DAMMON

REPORTED FOR THE
PISCATAQUIS FARMER

In offering the public the following report I feel it due to them as well as myself, to make a few remarks. When I volunteered to do it, I had no doubt but that the examination would have been gone through with in the course of a few hours. Judge then, what must be my surprise on finding the Court House filled to overflowing, and having it occupy such a length of time. To the witnesses I will say, I have abridged your testimony as much as possible, and have omitted much of the most unimportant part, in order to shorten the work, but have endeavored in no case to misrepresent you, and if you find an error, I beg you to impute it to my head, instead of heart.—To the reader I will remark, that much of the testimony was drawn out by questions, and I have omitted the questions in all cases where it could be dispensed with and shorten the work. To all, I offer it as an imperfect and impartial report. In consequence of my total inexperience, being but a laboring man, I should shrink from publishing it, but from the urgent solicitation of others. Thanking the Court for the favor of a seat, by them, and the Court and Counsel for the use of their minutes, I sign myself this once THE REPORTER.

N.B. I have preserved the language of the witnesses as much as possible.

“HARTFORD J. ROWE, of Dover, in the Co. of Piscataquis, Yeoman, upon his oath complains, that Israel Dammon, Commorant of Atkinson, in said County, Idler, is, and for several days last past, has been a vagabond and idle person, going about in the town of Atkinson, aforesaid, in the county aforesaid, from place to place, begging:—that he the said Israel Dammon is a common railer or brawler, neglecting his calling, or employment, misspending his earnings, and does not provide for the support of himself family, & against the peace of the State of Maine, and contrary to form of Statute in such cases made and provided.

He therefore prays that the said I. Dammon, may be apprehended and held to answer to said complaint and dealt with relative to the same as law and justice may require.”

Plead Not Guilty.

Court adjourned to one o'clock, P.M.

Opened agreeably to adjournment.

C.P. Chandler, H.G.O. Morison, for State. J.S. Holmes, for Respondent.

Opened by Chandler. Cited chap. 178, sec. 9, Revised Statutes. Adjourned to Court House.

Ebenezer Blethen, sworn. Have been in the house three times, saw nothing out of the way in Elder Dammon. Have seen others.

Objected to by Holmes. Confine your remarks to prisoner, he can in no ways be accountable for the conduct of others, and I object to any testimony except what goes to show what respondent [Dammon] has said or done, as wholly irrelevant.

that took place at the meetings, where the respondent was presiding elder.

Witness [Blethen]. The first meeting I attended was two weeks ago yesterday [2 February 1845]—saw people setting on the floor, and laying on the floor; Dammon setting on floor; they were leaning on each other. It did not have the appearance of a religious meeting.

Cross-examination. Saw nothing like licentiousness—there was exhortation and prayer each evening. Was there last time after [for the purpose of retrieving] part of my family.

J.W.E. Harvey, sworn. Have attended their meetings two days and four evenings. First meeting lasted eight days—have known Dammon six weeks—Dammon, White and Hall were leaders. Dammon said the sinners were going to hell in two days. They were hugging and kissing each other—Dammon would lay on the floor, then jump up—they would frequently go into another room. Dammon has no means to support himself that I know of. The meeting appeared very irreligious—have seen him sit on the floor with a woman between his legs and his arms around her.

Cross-examined. The room they went into was a back room; don't know what was in it—I was in two rooms where there was a fire. In the back room they said the world's people must not go. Dammon said the meeting was to be a private meeting and they wanted no one to come unless they believed as he did in the Advent doctrine. I did go considerably—if the meetings were religious ones I thought I had a right to go to them—I went to satisfy myself what was done. I had no hostile feeling against them. I think they held the first meeting a fortnight [two weeks before]. Dammon said he wanted no one to attend their meetings unless they believed in the advent doctrine.

Wm. C. Crosby, Esq. sworn. I was at the meeting last Saturday night, from about 7 o'clock to 9. There was a woman on the floor who lay on her back with a pillow under her head; she would occasionally arouse up and tell a vision which she said was revealed to her. They would at times all be talking at once, halloing at the top of their voices; some of them said there was too much sin there. After the cessation of the noise, Dammon got up and was more coherent—he complained of those that came there who did not believe in the advent doctrine. At one time Dammon said there was hogs there not belonging to the

Dammon, [James] White and Hall were leaders. Dammon said the sinners were going to hell in two days.

Monday, Feb. 17, 1845.
STATE OF MAINE,
vs.
ISRAEL DAMMON.

Prisoner arraigned before Moses Swett, Esq. of Foxcroft, associated by Seth Lee, Esq. of Atkinson, on the following complaint, to wit.

To Charles P. Chandler, Esq. one of the Justices of the Peace within and for the County of Piscataquis.

Question by Chandler. Who was the presiding elder at the meeting?

Ans. Elder Dammon presided and took the lead of the meetings that I attended.

Chandler and Morison. The meetings appear to be Elder Dammon's meetings—he took the lead and guided them, and is accountable for any public misconduct, and ought to check it: we propose to show the character of his meetings, to show the character of the man.

By the Court. You may relate any thing

band, and pointed at me, and said, I mean you, Sir. Subsequently he addressed me again—said, you can't drive us out of town; he stared me in the face and said, I am an honest man, or I could not look you in the face, and you have hell's brass or you could not look me in the face. Dammon said if he was owner of the house he would compel all unbelievers to leave it—they were setting and laying on the floor promiscuously and were exceedingly noisy.

Cross-examined. Did he not say if there was any there who did not come for instruction he did not want them there.

Ans. That is not what he said—he pointed to me and said he meant you—I never was more pointedly addressed in my life—we stood five or six feet apart, most of the men were on the floor—most of the women in chairs—Do not know how long Dammon has been in town.

Thomas Proctor, sworn. Saw the prisoner last Saturday—was present when he was taken; know nothing of the meetings myself.

Moses Gerrish, sworn. I have never attended any of their meetings, when the prisoner was present.

Loten Lambert, sworn. They were singing when I arrived—after singing they sat down on the floor—Dammon said a sister had a vision to relate—a woman on the floor then related her vision. Dammon said all other denominations were wicked—they were liars, whoremasters, murderers, &c.—he also run upon all such as were not believers with him. He ordered us off—we did not go. The woman that lay on the floor relating visions, was called by Elder Dammon and others, Imitation of Christ. Dammon called us hogs and devils, and said if he was the owner of the house he would drive us off—the one that they called imitation of Christ, told Mrs. Woodbury and others, that they must forsake all their friends or go to hell. Imitation of Christ, as they called her, would lay on the floor a while, then rise up and call upon some one and say she had a vision to relate to them, which she would relate; there was one girl that they said must be baptized that night or she must go to hell; she wept bitterly and wanted to see her mother first; they told her she must leave her mother or go to hell—one voice said, let her go to hell. She finally concluded to be baptized. Imitation of Christ told her vision to a cousin of mine, that she must be baptized that night or go to hell—she objected, because she had once been baptized. Imitation of Christ was said to be a woman from Portland. A woman that they called Miss Baker, said the devil was here, and she wanted to see him—she selected me and said, you are the devil, and will go to hell. I told her she want [was not] my judge. Mr. [James] Ayer [Jr., owner of the house] then clinched me and tried to put me out door. I told him we had not come to disturb the meeting. The vision woman called [to] Joel Doore, said he had doubted, and would not be baptized again—she said Br. Doore don't go to hell. Doore kneeled to her feet and prayed.

Miss Baker and a man went into the bedroom—subsequently heard a voice in the room hallo Oh! The door was opened—I saw into the room—she was on the bed—he was hold of her; they came out of the bedroom hugging each other, she jumping up and would throw her legs between his. Miss Baker went to Mr. Doore and said, you have refused me before, he said he had—they then kissed each other—she said “that feels good”—just before they went to the water to baptize, Miss Baker went into the bedroom with a man they called Elder White—saw him help her on to the bed—the light was brought out and door closed. I did not see either of them afterwards. Once I was in the other room talking with my cousin. Dammon and others came into the room and stopped our discourse, and called her sister and me the devil. Imitation of Christ lay on the floor during the time they went down to the water to baptize, and she continued on the floor until I left, which was between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock at night.

Cross-examined. Answer. The visionist lay down on the floor I should think about 7 o'clock—she lay there from that time until I left. Dammon and others called her Imitation of Christ. Part of the time Dammon was down on the floor on his back—can't say certainly who first said she was Imitation of Christ, but can say Dammon repeatedly said so—Dammon said Christ revealed to her and she to others. I am not acquainted with Elder White. They called him Eld. White. They said if the Almighty had anything to say he revealed it to her, and she acted as mediator.

Wm. Ricker, sworn. Know Elder Dammon—I went to attend their meeting once: they told me there would be none—I asked them where it would be on the next Sabbath? They told me they know not where; but they did not admit any but the advent band. I asked Dammon if that was Christ's religion? He said it is ours.

Leonard Downes, sworn.—Went to meeting with Loten Lambert, and kept with him; heard him testify, and know what he has related to be true. He omitted one thing. I saw Dammon kiss other people's wives. (Witness

derers, &c. He said read the *Star*. By spells it was the most noisy assembly I ever attended—there was no order or regularity, nor anything that resembled any other meeting I ever attended—Dammon seemed to have the lead and the most art. I don't say Dammon shouted the loudest; I think some others stronger in the lungs than he.

Deacon James Rowe, sworn. I was at Ayer's a short time last Saturday evening—Elder Dammon found fault with us for coming to his meeting—he spoke of other denominations as Esq. Crosby has just testified—said the church members were the worst people in the world. I have been young, and now am old, and of all the places I ever was in, I never saw such a confusion, not even in a drunken frolic. Dammon stood up on the floor and said, I am going to stand here—and while I stand here, they can't hurt you, neither men nor devils can't hurt you.

Cross-examined: He said all churches, made no distinction. I put no meaning to what he said, I only state what he did say. I have been acquainted with the prisoner twenty or thirty years; his character was good until recently.

Jeremiah B. Green, sworn. I attended an afternoon meeting a fortnight ago yesterday—they had an exhortation and prayer in the evening—I saw men wash men's feet, and women wash women's feet—they had dishes of water—Elder Dammon was the presiding elder—I saw Dammon kiss Mrs. Osborn.

Ebenezer Trundy, sworn. I was at meeting week before last,—I heard Dammon say, “God's a coming! God's a coming!” Mr. Boobar was telling of going into the woods to labor—Dammon said he ought not to go. Boobar said he had a family to support and was poor. Dammon told him he must live on them that had property, and if God did not come then we must all go to work together.

Joseph Moulton, sworn. When I went to arrest prisoner, they shut the door against me. Finding I could not gain access to him without, I burst open the door. I went to the prisoner and took him by the hand and told

Imitation of Christ told her vision to a cousin of mine, that she must be baptized that night or go to hell....

underwent a severe cross-examination, in which his testimony was so near a repetition of Mr. Lambert's, that it is by me, considered useless to copy it.)

Wm. C. Crosby, reexamined. I saw no kissing, but heard about it. I did not stay late, went about 7, left about 9 o'clock. After the visionist called them up she told them they doubted. Her object seemed to be to convince them they must not doubt.—Dammon called the churches whoremasters, liars, thieves, scoundrels, wolves in sheep's clothing, mur-

him my business. A number of women jumped on to him—he clung to them, and they to him. So great was the resistance, that I with three assistants, could not get him out. I remained in the house and sent for more help; after they arrived we made a second attempt with the same result—I again sent for more help—after they arrived we overpowered them and got him out door in custody. We were resisted by both men and women. Can't describe the place—it was one continued shout.

Wm. C. Crosby, Esq., called again. Prisoner has been reported to have been there about a fortnight, with no visible means of support.

J.W.E. Harvey, reexamined. Prisoner has been there considerable. I know of no means he has of support, other than to live on his followers.

T. Proctor, reexamined. Prisoner has been reported as a man who has no means of support—I do not know of his having any.

Jacob Martin, sworn. It is the common report that the prisoner is living upon his followers. I have attended no meetings of their's. Have seen a number of sleighs there, and fifteen or twenty strangers.

Benjamin Smith, Esq., Selectman of Atkinson, sworn. I have been called upon by the citizens of Atkinson to interfere and put a stop to these meetings—they gave as a reason, that the defendant and others were living upon certain citizens of said town—and that they were liable to become town charge. I started today to go there, but learned that the prisoner had been arrested and that the others had dispersed.

Here the government stopped. Court adjourned to half past 6 o'clock.

Evening—Respondent's [defense] witnesses.

James Ayer, Jr., affirmed. The most of the meetings were at my house. I have generally attended them—sometimes I was out. I have heard the testimony on the part of the State. Some things stated I do not recollect. I was there last Saturday evening—saw no kissing. I agree with Crosby and Lambert substantially. I understood prisoner to say there were members of the churches who he referred to instead of the whole. Saw the woman with a pillow under her head—her name is Miss Ellen Harmon, of Portland. I heard nothing said by her or others about imitation of Christ. I saw Miss Baker laying on the floor. I saw her fall. Saw Miss Baker and Sister Osborn go into the bedroom—Sister Osborn helped her on to the bed, came out and shut the door. There was no man in the bedroom that evening. I heard the noise in the bedroom—Brother Wood of Orrington and I went in; asked her what was the matter, she made no reply, and I went out. Brother Wood assisted her off of the bed, and helped her out—she appeared in distress. She told brother Doore she was distressed on his account—was afraid he would loose his soul, and advised him to be baptized. Did not see them kiss each other. It is a part of our faith to kiss each other—brothers kiss sisters and sisters kiss brothers, I think we have Bible authority for that. I understood the prisoner to say, there was an account in the *Star* of a deacon who had killed seven men. The reason of our kneeling, I consider an object of humiliation.

Cross-examined.—I know nothing about Miss Harmon's character. I did not say there was no kissing—I saw none. Did not hear her called Imitation of Christ. Elder Dammon

has had no other business, but to attend meetings. He and another man from Exeter, came with a young girl. Dammon said he had a spiritual wife and he was glad of it. I went to Mr. Lambert and said if he disturbed the meeting, he must go out door. We went to the water after 11 o'clock—Brother Dammon baptized two. I know nothing about Sister Baker's character—seen her at meeting in Orrington. I understood Sister Harmon had a vision at Portland, and was travelling through the country relating it.

Job Moody, affirmed. I was at meeting Saturday evening. Brother Dammon said in relation to other churches they were bad enough; said they were corrupt; he spoke of

exhortation for that. Sister Baker has a good character—the wickedest man in Orrington says she has a good character, and that's enough to establish any character, when the worst man admits it. (roar of laughter) We wish to go through the ordinance of washing feet in secret. Did not see any kissing, but presume their was, as it is a part of our faith. Think Esq. Crosby's testimony correct.

By Court [a question]:—

Answer. Elder Dammon does advise us to quit all work.

Abraham Pease, affirmed. Reside in Exeter, prisoner's character is as good as any man in Exeter. He has a small farm, and small family. He is a reformation preacher—

I again sent for more help... We were resisted by both men and women. Can't describe the place — it was one continued shout.

the *Star*—he did not say they were thieves, &c. I am not certain, but think he said that evening there was exceptions. Sister Harmon would lay on the floor in a trance, and the Lord would reveal their cases to her, and she to them.

By the Court [a question of Moody].

Answer. Mr. Dammon repeatedly urged upon us the necessity of quitting all labor. Kissing is a salutation of love; I greet them so—we have got positive scripture for it—I reside in Exeter.

Here the witness was told he might take his seat. He said I have some testimony in relation to Brother Dammon's character, if I am not a going to be called again. He then stated that he had been acquainted with Brother Dammon five or six years, and his character was good. He works part of the time, and preaches a part of the time. I have been serving the Lord and hammering against the devil of late.

Isley Osborn, affirmed. I know nothing bad in Brother Dammon's character. He believes there is good, bad, and indifferent in all churches—he thinks it best to come out from them, because there is so many that has fallen from their holy position.—Do not recollect hearing him use the expressions about churches they have sworn to, but have heard him use as strong language against them. Do not call Sister Harmon Imitation of Christ. They lose their strength and fall on the floor. The Lord communicates to them through a vision, so we call it the Lord. Brother White did not go into the bedroom, nor any other man.

Cross-examined. She told them their cases had been made known to her by the Lord, and if they were not baptized that evening, they would go to hell. We believed her, and Brother Dammon and I advised them to be baptized. Brother Dammon thought it best to keep the meetings secret, so they would not crowd in. Hold to kissing—have scripture

reformation has followed his preaching.

Gardner Farmer, affirmed. Reside in Exeter—prisoner provides well for his family. He has been to my house, and I to his—he always behaves well. I saw him in Atkinson a fortnight ago last Tuesday.

Court adjourned to Tuesday morning 9 o'clock.

Tuesday, [Feb.] 18.

Jacob Mason, affirmed. Reside in Garland. Brother Dammon said the churches were of that description—said they were lyers, rogues, &c. I did not understand him to include all, but individuals. Sister Baker's character is good. Do not recollect of Brother Gallison using any compulsion, to make his daughter go forward in baptism. I saw Elder White after Sister Baker went into the bedroom, near Sister Harmon in a trance—some of the time he held her head. She was in a vision, part of the time insensible. Saw nothing improper in Brother Dammon that evening. I never knew him [to be] a beggar, or wasting his time.

Cross-examined. Do not know who it was that went into the bedroom with Sister Baker—he was a stranger to me; he soon came out. Can't say how soon he went in again. I have heard Crosby testify, and think him correct. I thought her visions were from God—she would describe out their cases correct. She described mine correct. I saw kissing out door, but not in the house. A part of the time we sat on the floor—both men and women promiscuously. I saw no man go into the bedroom. They wash feet in the evening. It is a practice in our order to kiss, on our meeting each other. Sister Harmon was not called Imitation of Christ to my knowledge. I think I should have heard it if she was. I believe in visions. Sister Harmon is eighteen or nineteen years of age; she is from Portland.

Joel Doore, affirmed. Reside in Atkinson—Elder Dammon said there was bad characters in the churches; I did not under-

stand him to say all. He preaches louder than most people; no more noisy than common preachers of this faith. The vision woman would lay looking up when she came out of her trance—she would point to someone, and tell them their cases, which she said was from the Lord. She told a number of visions that evening. Brother Gallison's daughter wanted to see her mother before she was baptized, but finally concluded to be baptized without seeing her. Sister Baker got up off the floor, and went to Lambert to talk with him. I saw no more of her, until I heard a noise in the bedroom—they went and got her out, as the other witnesses have stated. After she came out, she said she had a message to me. She said I had thought hard of her, (I acknowledged I had) but I became satisfied of my error, and fellowshipped her. We kissed each other with the holy kiss—I think Elder White was not in the bedroom that evening; but I don't know how many, nor who were there. The girls that was baptized were seventeen years old, one of them had been baptized before. We have Scripture enough for everything that was done. There was not one tenth part of the noise Saturday evening, that there generally is at the meetings I attend. As far as I am acquainted with Elder Dammon, I consider him a moral good man.

Cross-examined. When she kissed me, she said there was light ahead. We believe her (Miss Baker's) visions genuine. We believe Miss Harmon's genuine—'t was our understanding that their visions were from God. Miss Hammond [Harmon] told five visions Saturday night. I did not tell any person yesterday that it was necessary to have anyone in the room with her to bring out her trances. I did engage counsel in this case to defend the prisoner.

John H. Doore, sworn. I was not at meeting Saturday evening. I belong to the society, and have seen nothing out of character in anyone. Don't consider Elder Dammon a bad man—he a man I highly esteem. My

edge any leaders, but speak according to the impulse. The elders baptize. I believe in Miss Harmon's visions, because she told my wife's feelings correctly. It is my impression that prisoner kissed my wife. I believe the world will come to an end within two months—prisoner preaches so. I believe this is the faith of the band. It was said, and I believe, that Sisters Harmon and Baker's revelations as much as though they came from God. Sister Harmon said to my wife and the girls if they did not do as she said, they would go to hell. My wife and Dammon passed across the floor on their hands and knees. Some man did go into the bedroom. Heard Brother Dammon say the gift of healing the sick lay in the church.

By the Court [a question].

Answer. Elder Dammon advises us not to work, because there is enough to live on until the end of the world.

John Gallison, affirmed. (Chandler observed that he had thought of objecting to this witness on the ground of insanity, but upon reflection, he would let him proceed, as he believed it [his insanity] would sufficiently appear in the course of the examination.)

I have been acquainted with Elder Dammon as a Freewill elder a number of years. He asked Dammon how long it was. D. answered six years. I have been at his house frequently—everything was in order and in its proper place. I have attended every meeting. I have seen some laying on the floor, two or more at a time—have seen nothing bad in the meetings. (Witness here described the position Miss Harmon lay in on the floor, when she was in a trance, and offered to lay down and show the Court if they wished to see. Court waived it.)

Witness related the visions similar to the other witnesses, but more unintelligible.

Did not hear her called Imitation of Christ. I know she won't [was not], for we don't worship idols.

Cross-examined. I believe in visions, and perfectly understand that, but suppose we are

what others have testified to, of which the reader I think must be weary.)

I did not see White go into the bedroom with Miss Baker—heard the noise in the bedroom. Others did go in. Elder D[ammon] said the churches were in a fallen state, and he had rather risk himself in the hands of the Almighty as a non-professor, than to be in the place of some of the churches. I believe fully in the faith. (Witness affirmed the story of kissing, rolling on the floor, and washing of feet.)

Joshua Burnham, sworn. I have known Miss Dorinda Baker from five years of age—her character is good—she is now twenty three or twenty-four years of age. She is a sickly girl, her father has expended \$1,000 in doctoring her. I was at the meeting Saturday night—it was appointed for the lady to tell her visions.

Adjourned to half past one o'clock.

Levi M. Doore, sworn. I have attended more than half of the meetings—my brother's testimony is correct—agree also with Mr. Boobar.

Question by Respondent. Answer. Elder Dammon's mode of worship now is similar to what it used to be.

Cross-examined by Morison. Did they use to sit on the floor? Ans. No. Did they use to lay or crawl on the floor? Ans. No. Did they use to kiss each other? Ans. No. Did they use to go into the bedroom? Ans. No. Did they use to tell visions? Ans. No.

By Morison. Why do you say that his mode of worship is similar to what it used to be? Because he preaches similar. Did he use to preach that the end of the world was at hand, and baptize in the dead hours of night? Ans. No. The reason we sit on the floor is to convene more people—sometimes we take some in our laps, but not male and female. Don't know of Brother D[ammon] spending money uselessly. I am a believer. Sometimes we sit on the floor for formality. Our faith don't hold it to be essential. (Witness repeated the mode of kissing, visions, &c. similar to the others.) I never heard Brother Dammon say he wished to destroy the marriage covenant. (Respondent here reexamined a number of witnesses, all of whom testified that he used his wife well, and appeared to love her.)

Stephen Fish, Exeter, sworn. I attended the meetings at Atkinson, last summer—have attended most all of the Quarterly Meetings for seven years—have been to Elder Dammon's house, and he to mine—he provides well in his house—he has always opposed the mode of paying the ministry by regular salary. (Here the defense closed.)

WITNESSES FOR STATE.

Ebenezer Lambert, Esq., sworn. Last Sunday evening Loton Lambert told me the story of the meeting the evening before—he related as he testified yesterday almost verbatim.

John Bartlett, of Garland, sworn. I have heard the respondent say that one of their

We kissed each other with the holy kiss — I think Elder White was not in the bedroom that evening.

daughter was baptized Saturday evening—she has been baptized before. I have seen both men and women crawl across the floor on their hands and knees.

George S. Woodbury, sworn. I am a believer in the Advent doctrine—I have attended every one of the meetings in Atkinson.

(This witness was very lengthy in his testimony, both on examination and cross-examination. It amounts to the same as the preceding witnesses for the defense with the following additions.)

He thinks Elder White was not in the bedroom, but others were in. We don't acknowl-

not before an Ecclesiastical Council.—Elder Dammon does not believe as he used to. (Witness read from the Bible.) We do wash each other's feet—do creep on the floor very decently. I think he has baptized about eleven, but can't say certain how many—I have the privilege of knowing how they behave as well as anyone else. I have no doubt Sister Harmon's visions were from God—she told my daughter so. I was in favor of my daughter being baptized—I could not see ahead to see the devil's rabble coming, but since they have come, I am certain we did just right.

Abel S. Boobar, affirmed. (Most of the testimony of this witness was a repetition of

band was as near to him as another—he considered them all alike. It is the general opinion in our town that the prisoner is a disturber of the peace, and ought to be taken care of. I have been acquainted with Elder Dammon seven years—his character was always good until within about six weeks.

Loton Lambert, reexamined. He affirmed all his former testimony—does not know Elder White, but Joel Doore told me it was White that was in the bedroom with Miss Baker.

Cross-examined. There was nothing to

the meetings a number of times—I have seen prisoner on the floor with a woman between his legs—I have seen them in groups hugging and kissing one another. I went there once on an errand—Dam[mon] halloed out “Good God Almighty, drive the Devil away.” I once saw Elder Hall with his boots off, and the women would go and kiss his feet. One girl made a smack, but did not hit his foot with her lips. Hall said “he that is ashamed of me before men, him will I be ashamed of before my Father and the holy angels.” She then gave his feet a number of kisses.

The prisoner having taken his seat, rose just as the Court came in, and shouted Glory to the strength of his lungs.

obstruct my views—the man had on a dark colored short jacket, and I think light pantaloons.

Leonard Downes, reexamined. Did see Miss Baker come out of the bedroom with a man he had his arm around her—see her go in with a man and shut the door. He had on a short jacket, dark colored, and light colored panataloons—saw her kiss Mr. Doore—she said “that feels good.”

Thomas Proctor, reexamined. Prisoner stated to me that Miss Baker had an exercise in the bedroom, and he went in and helped her out.

Cross-examined. I have said I wished they were broken up, and wished somebody would go and do it. I have said Elder Hall ought to be tarred and feathered if he was such a character as I heard he was. I was at one meeting, but as to divine worship there was none. They told us they allowed none there but believers.

A.S. Bartlett, Esq., sworn. Yesterday I saw Mr. Joel Doore and Loton Lambert conversing together. I went to them—I heard Doore say to him, it was Elder White that was in the bedroom with Miss Baker—Lambert said that was what I wanted to know. I so understood, and think I am not mistaken. I also heard Doore say there was a noise in the bedroom.

Elder Flavel Bartlett, sworn. I think Prisoner does not belong to the Free Will Baptist Church. He is not in fellowship with them.

Joseph Knights of Garland, sworn. I attended one of Dammon’s meetings in Garland, he behaved well until meeting was over. After meeting was over I saw him hugging and kissing a girl. It is the common report in Garland, that he is a disturber of the peace.

Plyn Clark, sworn. I attended their meeting a week ago last Wednesday or Thursday night. (This witness gave a general character of the meeting as described by others.)

I heard one hallo out “I feel better”—others said “good enough.” I think the whole character of the meeting was demoralizing.

J.W.E. Harvey, called. I have attended

Joel Doore, Jr., called for the defense. I have heard Brother Dammon preach that the day of grace was over with sinners. Respondent said “that is my belief.”

Levi M. Doore, called. Br[other] Wood was dressed in light pants and dark jacket.

Joel Door, Jr., called. Brother Wood had light pants and dark jacket.

Abel Ayer, called. Brother Wood went to the baptism and was about all the evening.

James Boobar, called. Sister Baker and Br[other] Wood were about all the evening. Elder White had a frock coat and dark pants.

Prisoner opened his defense and cited Luke 7 chapter 36 verse—John 13 chapter—Last chapter in Romans—Phillipians 4th chapter—1st Thessalonians 5th chapter. Holmes followed with the defense. Court adjourned one hour. (Holmes closed the defense with signal ability. Chandler commenced in behalf of the State. Cited 178 chapter 9th and 10th sections Revised Statutes; he dwelt upon the law; after which

Morison summoned up the testimony and closed with a few brief and appropriate remarks.

Elder Dammon again rose for further defense. Court indulged him to speak. He read 126th Psalm, and the 50th Psalm. He argued that the day of grace had gone by, that the believers were reduced; but that there was too many yet, and that the end of the world would come within a week.

The Court after consultation sentenced the prisoner to the House of Correction for the space of Ten Days, From this judgment Respondent appealed.

Tuesday morning the prisoner having taken his seat, rose just as the Court came in, and shouted Glory to the strength of his lungs.

Tuesday afternoon, after the Court had came in and were waiting for the counsel, the prisoner and his witnesses asked permission, and sung as follows:

“COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE.”
See Rev. 18th Ch. 4th V.
By John Craig.

While I was down in Egypt’s land,
I heard my Saviour was at hand;
The midnight cry was sounding,
And I wanted to be free,
So I left my former brethren
To sound the jubilee.

They said that I had better stay
And go with them in their old way;
But they scoff at my Lord’s coming—
With them I could not agree,
And I left their painted synagogue
To sound the jubilee.

Then soon I joined the Advent Band,
Who just came out from Egypt’s land;
They were on the road to Canaan,
A blest praying company,
And with them I am proclaiming
That this year’s the jubilee.

They call us now a noisy crew,
And say they hope we’ll soon fall thro’;
But we now are growing stronger,
Both in love and unity,
Since we left old mystic Babylon
To sound the jubilee.

We’re now united in one band,
Believing Christ is just at hand
To reward his faithful children
Who are glad their Lord to see;
Bless the Lord our souls are happy
While we sound the jubilee.

Though opposition waxes strong,
Yet still the battle won’t be long;
Our blessed Lord is coming,
“His glory we shall see;”
Keep up good courage brethren—
This year’s the jubilee.

If Satan comes to tempt your mind,
Then meet him with these blessed lines,
Saying, “Get behind me, Satan,”
I have naught to do with thee;
I have got my soul converted,
And I’ll sound the jubilee.

The battle is not to the strong,
The weak may sing the conqueror’s song;
I’ve been through the fiery furnace,
And no harm was done to me,
I came out with stronger evidence
This year’s the jubilee.

A little longer here below,
And home to glory we will go;
I believe it! I believe it!
Hallelujah, I am free
From all sectarian prejudice—
This year’s the jubilee.

We’ll soon remove to that blest shore,
And shout and sing forever more,
Where the wicked cannot enter
To disturb our harmony;
But we’ll wear the crowns of glory
With our God eternally.

(Note: In what follows, all unreferenced quotes will be from the 7 March 1845 *Piscataquis Farmer* story. After each unreferenced quote, two numbers separated by a colon (for instance, 19:3) will be printed in parentheses. These indicate the page and column in this journal where the quote may be found.)

Under oath or under inspiration—who to believe?

The *Piscataquis Farmer* report of the Dammon trial raises two important questions for Seventh-day Adventists. One, are Mrs. White's retrospectives on her own lifework reliable, even in a general way? And, two, to what extent did she participate in post-1844, Millerite fanaticism?

A start can be made in answering question one by comparing and contrasting Mrs. White's account of Dammon's arrest and trial with the *Farmer* reporter's abridgement of the trial testimony.

The *Piscataquis Farmer* coverage of the Israel Dammon trial has overwhelming face-value credibility: (1) the number of witnesses (20 for the prosecution, 18 for the defense); (2) the integrity of the witnesses, most of whom were God-fearing people who would not take an oath lightly; (3) the quality of the witnesses (several of the prosecution

witnesses were attorneys and justices of the peace who had a vested interest in the integrity of their legal system); (4) the almost total agreement among the witnesses—both for the defense and the prosecution—about the incident; (5) the contemporaneity of the testimony to the event (two days later); (6) the obvious authenticity of the dialogue; (7) the exceptionally long and verbatim reporting; (8) the reporter's use of court and counsel minutes; and (9) the reporter's expressed concern for the faithfulness of his report to the witnesses' testimony: "I...have endeavored in no case to misrepresent you, and if you find an error, I beg you to impute it to my head, instead of heart....I offer it as an imperfect and impartial report." (18:1)

White Estate undersecretary Paul Gordon grasped at the reporter's candor and modesty to denigrate his report: "I think we must remember that the reporter...apologizes for it not being perhaps as accurate as it could be....At any rate, it appears to be one reporter's account of the trial that is imperfect, to say the least."²³

Actually the reporter was telling the witnesses and the *Farmer*'s readers just what pains he had taken to be accurate. "I have abridged your testimony as much as possible" from the minutes of "the Court and the Counsel," omitting only "the most unimportant part." (18:1)

Dammon Trial Witnesses

Thirty-eight individuals (including Dammon) testified during the two-day trial of Israel Dammon at the Piscataquis County courthouse in Dover, Maine. Twenty witnesses appeared for the prosecution and eighteen spoke for the defense. Two state and six defense witnesses (including Dammon) were from adjacent Penobscot County.

The 1850 United States Census Bureau records for Piscataquis and Penobscot counties contain entries for fifteen of the state and twelve of the defense witnesses. An alphabetical listing of all the witnesses is printed below. Ages are extrapolated from the age given in the 1850 census. Place of residence, profession, and marital status are also provided. (Hartford J. Rowe is included among the prosecution witnesses because he brought the complaint against Dammon.)

Witnesses for the prosecution

1. A.S. Bartlett, Esq. (31). Dover trader. Wife, Lydia (25). Lived next door to Elder Flavel Bartlett.
2. Elder Flavel Bartlett (53). Dover trader. Wife, Hannah (50).
3. John Bartlett (23). Garland farmer. Wife, Sarah (23).
4. Ebenezer Blethen (40). Atkinson farmer. Wife, Margaret (43).
5. Plyn Clark (54). Atkinson farmer. Wife, Deliverance (54).
6. William C. Crosby, Esq. (37). Attorney who moved to Bangor. Wife, Mary (33).
7. Leonard Downes (19). Dover farmer. Wife, Mary J. (20). Lived near Ebenezer Lambert and Hartford J. Rowe.
8. Moses Garrish (25). Greenville farmer.
9. Jeremiah B. Green.
10. J.W.E. Harvey. Any one of three census entries could have been this Harvey.
11. Joseph Knight (28). Garland farmer. Wife, Lydia A. (21).
12. Ebenezer Lambert, Esq. (51). Dover farmer. Wife, Sarah (53). Lived between Hartford J. Rowe and Leonard Downes.
13. Loton Lambert. Probably the son of Paul Lambert and brother of Ebenezer.
14. Jacob Martin (52). Atkinson farmer. Wife, Abigail (43). Neighbor to Ebenezer Blethen.
15. Joseph Moulton (47). Township .8, Range 8 farmer; also deputy sheriff. Wife, Abigail (47).
16. Thomas Proctor (40). Dover farmer. Wife, Margaret (39).
17. William Ricker (37). Dover farmer. Wife, Mary (38).
18. Deacon James Rowe. Pioneer resident of Dover, settling there in 1808. Famous for his role in apprehending the "Exeter counterfeiters" in 1829.
19. Hartford J. Rowe (33). Dover farmer.
20. Benjamin Smith, Esq. Atkinson Selectman and Justice of the Peace.
21. Ebenezer Trundy (41). Dover farmer. Wife, Hannah P. (38).

Witnesses for the defense

1. Abel Ayer.
2. James Ayer, Jr. (39). Atkinson farmer. Wife, Elmira (22). 15 February 1845 Saturday night meeting was held in his home. Lived four houses from John Doore.
3. Abel S. Boobar (30). Atkinson farmer. Wife, Sarah (25).
4. James Boobar.
5. Joshua Burnham (59). Atkinson farmer. Wife, S. (57).
6. Elder Israel Dammon. Exeter, former sea captain.
7. Joel Doore (65). Atkinson. Wife, Hannah, 64. His son, Joel, Jr., and family lived with him. Neighbor to Isley Osborn and Levi Doore.
8. Joel Doore, Jr. (31). Atkinson. Wife, Sally (27).
9. John H. Doore (43). Atkinson.
10. Levi M. Doore (35). Atkinson. Wife, Patience (22).
11. Gardner Fariner. Garland.
12. Stephen Fish (34). Corinth blacksmith. Wife, Betsey (38).
13. John M. Gallison (50-60). Dover.
14. Jacob Mason (27). Garland farmer. Wife, Elizabeth (26).
15. Job Moody (32). Bangor porter. Wife, Abigail (30). Lived near Daniel Oakes and his daughters who were imprisoned briefly in April 1845 for being "Idlers and Vagrants and disturbers of the public peace" in Bangor.
16. Isley Osborn (35). Atkinson. Wife, Susan (31). Lived next to Joel Doore.
17. Abraham Pease. Possibly Abram (69) or Abram Jr. (40) of Wellington.
18. George S. Woodbury (23). Dover millman. Wife, Jane (21).

Information not supplied by the 1850 census was drawn from Amasa Loring's *History of Piscataquis County Maine. From its Earliest Settlement to 1880* (Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, Portland, ME.:1880). Data regarding the Daniel Oakes family is from the *Bangor Whig and Courier*, 2 April 1845.

Gordon has another argument: "You can quickly see that their [defense and prosecution witnesses] testimony contradicted each other in almost every case.... It would appear that those against Dammon were telling one story, and those that were for him told another."²⁴

Apparently Gordon had not taken the opportunity to read the reporter's abridgement of the trial minutes very carefully. The witnesses all agreed on all points of any substance except whether or not Ellen Harmon was referred to as "imitation of Christ," and who was in the bedroom with Dorinda Baker and why.

Three defense witnesses, each represented at length in the *Farmer* report, expressly affirmed the testimony of prosecution witness William Crosby, Esq. James Ayer, Jr., host for the Saturday evening meeting, testified: "I agree with Crosby and Lambert substantially." (20:1) Isley Osborn said, "Think Esq. Crosby's testimony correct." (20:3) And Jacob Mason added, "I have heard Crosby testify, and think him correct." (20:3)

It does appear, as Gordon surmises, that Dammon did not serve his sentence. But it was not, as Gordon further speculates, "because there was such conflicting testimony."²⁵ Had the testimony been as conflicting as Gordon claims, the Dover Court would not have "sentenced the prisoner to the House of Correction for the space of Ten Days."

Apparently, defense counsel Holmes appealed. Because Dammon himself wrote that after his sentencing he "was put over until May term [district court session], then the warrant was quashed; and I was acquitted without date."²⁶

Calling it "one of the grandest defenses of religious toleration and freedom, that it has ever been my pleasure to listen to," one of Holmes' contemporaries, Joseph D. Brown, remembered Holmes' representation of Dammon as an "eloquent argument for religious freedom and toleration and the right of every person to worship God according to the dictates of his own conscience, under his own vine and fig tree."²⁷

Dammon did not get off, as Gordon suggests, "because there was such conflicting testimony"; or, as Mrs. White remembered, because the testimony of the prosecution's "many witnesses... were at once broken down by the testimony of Eld. D.'s acquaintances present, who were called to the stand."²⁸ It was argument from law, not testimony, that rescued Dammon from ten days in jail.

It is ironic that this defender of a fanatical Adventist was a veteran Free Mason who became the first Master of the Masonic Lodge organized at Foxcroft in the year of Dammon's trial. "Religiously he was a Free Thinker, though he affiliated with the Universalists."²⁹

Former White Estate associate secretary Ronald Graybill wove an apologetic of his own—suggesting that in Atkinson, James White and Ellen Harmon were caught off their guard and out of their element:

I don't know how much of this fanatic behavior went on in Portland. But in a sense she had her own first exposure to it in Atkinson. After she went through this experience, she rode calmly to the next town with James and Sister Foss in the carriage. James may have said, "Boy, I hope we never get into one of *those* again."³⁰

It can be established clearly from Mrs. White's publications and letters that Atkinson was not Miss Harmon's "first exposure" to fanaticism.

It can be established clearly from Mrs. White's publications and letters that Atkinson was not Miss Harmon's 'first exposure' to fanaticism.

On an autumn evening in 1842 she was for the first time prostrated by the power of the Holy Spirit—what was termed the "second" blessing—and was unable to return home that night.³¹

Before she met Israel Dammon, Ellen Harmon's very first vision (December 1844) clearly indicates that she believed in "wash[ing] one another's feet and salute[ing] the brethren with a holy kiss."³²

In her earliest published account Mrs. White names some of the towns that she visited on her first journey to eastern Maine: Poland,

Witnessing for Dammon

Serving as a witness for Israel Dammon wasn't necessarily easy, as Levi M. Doore discovered. Neither did his experience in the witness box corroborate Mrs. White's assertion that the prosecution witnesses "were at once broken down by the testimony of Eld. D.'s acquaintances, who were called to the stand." Assistant prosecutor H.G.O. Morrison cross-examined Doore following his testimony that "Elder Dammon's mode of worship now is similar to what it used to be."

Morrison: Did they use to sit on the floor?

Doore: No.

Morrison: Did they use to lay or crawl on the floor?

Doore: No.

Morrison: Did they use to kiss each other?

Doore: No.

Morrison: Did they use to go into the bedroom?

Doore: No.

Morrison: Did they use to tell visions?

Doore: No.

Morrison: Why do you say that his mode of worship is similar to what it used to be?

Doore: Because he preaches similar.

Morrison: Did he use to preach that the end of the world was at hand, and baptize in the dead hours of night?

Doore: No.

Orrington, Garland, Exeter, and Atkinson (see map p. 27).³³

Before the arresting weekend in Atkinson, Miss Harmon had been to Orrington, where she joined forces with James White. At Garland she received a letter from her mother "begging" her to come home to Portland because "false reports were being circulated concerning me." But she had "great freedom" in bearing her testimony there, and "heart-felt shouts of glory and victory went up from that house" in Garland.³⁴ At the very least, the Garland meeting must have been a bit noisy.

Miss Harmon's next stop was Exeter, Israel Dammon's home town. Two years later Mrs. White wrote to Joseph Bates about her part in that meeting:

The view about the bridegroom coming I had about the middle of February, 1845. While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Dammon, James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door. I suffered much at the commencement of the meeting. Unbelief seemed to be on every hand.

There was one sister there that was called very spiritual. She had traveled and been a powerful preacher the most of the time for twenty years. She had been truly a mother in Israel. But a division had risen in the band on the shut door. She had great sympathy, and could not believe the door was shut. (I had known nothing of their differences.) Sister Durben got up to talk. I felt very, very sad.

At length my soul seemed to be in an agony, and while she was talking I fell from my chair to the floor. It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from his mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as bridegroom to receive His kingdom. They were all deeply interested in the view. They all said it was entirely new to them. The Lord worked in mighty power setting the truth home to their hearts.

Sister Durben knew what the power of the Lord was for she had felt it many times; and a short time after I fell she was struck down, and fell to the floor, crying to God to have mercy on her. When I came out of vision, my ears were saluted with Sister Durben singing and shouting with a loud voice. Most of them received the vision and were settled upon the shut door.³⁵

What Mrs. White wrote Joseph Bates of the Exeter meeting with Dammon, James, and others obviously was not intended as a description of the meeting as a whole; but what she did portray had the flavor of

a charismatic service. She and Sister Durben were both “struck down” or “slain upon the floor,” and Durben was shouting while Harmon was in vision. What else happened is not mentioned; but given Israel Dammon’s presence and probable leadership of the meeting, there is no good reason to doubt that he was involved in those “exercises” that he had been performing since the new year began.

Witnesses at the Dammon trial agreed that for several weeks he had been presiding over meetings at Garland, Exeter, and Atkinson; and that he was teaching and practicing no work, no more salvation for sinners, “holy kissing,” footwashing, creeping, and rebaptism.

John Bartlett of Garland testified that he had known Dammon for seven years and that “his character was always good until about six weeks [ago].” (22:1)

Jeremiah B. Green, under oath, said: “I attended an afternoon meeting a fortnight ago yesterday [Sunday, 2 February 1845]... elder Dammon was the presiding elder.” There Green witnessed footwashing and “saw Dammon kiss Mrs. Osborn.” (19:3)

J.W.E. Harvey told the court that he had attended several meetings. “First meeting lasted eight days—have known Dammon six weeks—Dammon, [James] White and Hall were leaders.” (18:3)

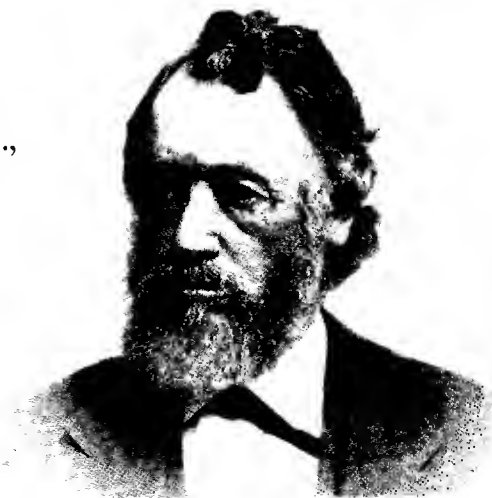
The Atkinson meeting obviously was not James White’s initiation; and Ellen Harmon had been traveling with him for at least a couple of weeks.³⁶

John Gallison testified that he had been acquainted with Dammon “a number of years,” had “attended every meeting” (including those “at his house”), and he believed Dammon had “baptised about eleven.” (21:2) The baptism rate began to pick up in the month after Dammon’s trial, as the new date (April 1845) set by O.R.L. Crosier and others for the Lord’s return approached.³⁷ March 20–24 found ten to fifteen candidates being baptised daily from among those still meeting at the James Ayer, Jr., home in Atkinson.³⁸ And, according to the *Oxford Democrat*, Dammon was still “their presiding elder.”³⁹

That Mrs. White was not put off by Dammon’s behavior in Atkinson is easily inferred from her own writing. In 1860 she recalled the meeting at Exeter and “what I had been shown concerning some fanatical persons present, who were exalted by the spirit of Satan.”⁴⁰ This cannot refer to Dammon whom “the Spirit of the Lord rested upon” a few days later (and on the next page)⁴¹ during his arrest in Atkinson. Mrs. White lionized Dammon at the trial; and not long thereafter she and Dammon were together in Topsham, Maine, where, she wrote, “Brother D. cried out in the Spirit, and power of God,” to encourage a prayer of healing for Frances Howland.⁴²

Graybill says that “after she went through this [Atkinson] experience, she rode calmly to the next town with James and Sister [Louisa] Foss in the carriage.”⁴³ It is unlikely that Miss Harmon “rode calmly to the next town.” She and James were departing the scene of an arrest. Had they been feeling calm and courageous, they might have joined their supporting testimony with that of the “strong brethren present who” Mrs. White later wrote, “had stood by him [Dammon] in the trial.”⁴⁴

William C.
Crosby, Esq.,
witness
for the
prosecution.



Courtesy: James B. Vickers collection

“Sister Foss” most likely was not “in the carriage.” This is probably why Ellen’s mother was “begging” her “to return home.”⁴⁵ The available documentation suggests that Louisa Foss first accompanied Ellen some time later, upon her initial journey to New Hampshire.⁴⁶ And, whoever she was traveling with, they were transported in a sleigh, not by carriage.

James White would not have said, “Boy, I hope we never get into one of those again.” As indicated by J.W.E. Harvey at the Dover courthouse, “Dammon, White and Hall were leaders” at an earlier meeting that “lasted eight days.” (18:3) And later in the summer of 1845 White identified closely with the fanatical Adventists, writing, “Most of our brethren are under guardianship,” and defiantly paraphrased part of his lady friend’s first vision:

By this time God made them [non-Millerite Christians] to know that he had loved the “fanciful,” “fanatical,” “disgraceful,” band, who could wash “one another’s feet.”⁴⁷

A year later, and four days before his wedding to Ellen, James White complained to “Brother Collins” about “a congregation of hard, ugly Congregationalists and Methodists” before which he was to preach a funeral service. He made certain that Collins understood that he was not “going to try to convert people to the Advent faith. No; it’s too late. But it’s our duty on some occasions to give a reason of our hope I think, even to *swine*.” A few lines later White mentioned a recent visit with some of his Adventist friends, concluding, “We had a Holy Ghost time together.”⁴⁸

Ellen White in the dock

Both the prosecution and defense witnesses agree essentially on what took place at the Ayer home in Atkinson on Saturday night, February 15, 1845. But there is substantial disagreement between Mrs. White’s 1860 account—fifteen years after the fact—and the testimony of the witnesses as reported in the *Piscataquis Farmer*. The record and the witnesses contradict her on major and minor points, and no witness supports her on any contested point (see box).

The contradiction that matters most is between the testimony of the arresting officer, Joseph Moulton, and the memory of Mrs. White over whether or not the participants in the Ayer home resisted Dammon’s arrest. Deputy sheriff Moulton testified that when he notified Dammon that he was under arrest, “a number of women jumped on to him—he clung to them, and they to him.” Moulton said that “so great was the resistance” that he had to send twice for reinforcements to help him and the three assistants who accompanied him. “We were resisted by both men and women,” Moulton said. (19:3)

Ellen White says that when the sheriff and his three deputies tried to arrest Dammon, “the Spirit of the Lord rested upon him, and his strength was taken away, and he fell to the floor helpless.” In their efforts to drag Dammon from the house, she recalled, the men “would move him a few inches only, and then rush out of the house” because “the power of God was in that room, and the servants of God with their countenances lighted up with his glory,” she insisted, “made no resistance.” But, despite a dozen men’s efforts, “Eld. D. was held by the power of God about forty minutes, and not all the strength of those men could move him from the floor where he lay helpless.”⁴⁹

Not only does Mrs. White contradict the arresting officer’s account of what he and his men experienced, but her version describes an event that clearly is beyond ordinary human experience. True or false, her version is fantastic. If Mrs. White was accurately describing a *supernatural* event, then the response of the people who witnessed or experienced it seems very *unnatural*. Such a remarkable event certainly would have become the focus of much attention. Yet not one of the many witnesses for either the defense or the prosecution contradicts Sheriff Moulton’s terse description of the arrest.

In fact, if twelve men worked strenuously and unsuccessfully to budge one prone and otherwise unimpeded individual, and if there had been such a powerful but invisible aura in the room that “it was a relief to them to rush out of the house” periodically, normal men would have been sufficiently spooked (or converted) by the experience to abandon their mission long before forty minutes had expired.

Mrs. White's errors on lesser points involving the trial itself further weaken the credibility of her account:

White: "A lawyer offered his services."⁵⁰ Witness Joel Doore, a Dammon partisan: "I did engage counsel in this case to defend the prisoner." (21:1)

White: Dammon "was asked to give them [the court] a synopsis of his faith."⁵¹ *Piscataquis Farmer*: "Court indulged him to speak." (22:2)

White: Dammon "was asked to sing one" of their "curious hymns."⁵² *Farmer* report: "The prisoner and his witnesses asked permission, and sung as follows: ... 'While I was down in Egypt's land, ...'" (22:2)

This incident from early 1845 presents modern Adventists with the unhappy choice between contemporaneous witnesses and the memory of their prophet—between testimony given under oath and statements made under inspiration.

Mrs. White a fanatic?

Adventists who are willing to let the accumulating weight of evidence influence their assessment of Mrs. White's memory will find helpful an overview of her participation in the fanaticism she insists she was fighting. The sworn testimony of the witnesses at the Dammon trial—for both the prosecution and the defense—suggests that Ellen Harmon was more involved in the bizarre "exercises" that precipitated Israel Dammon's arrest than Seventh-day Adventists have ever imagined.

All of Mrs. White's later published and unpublished statements about her earliest experience deny any participation in fanaticism. In fact, she strongly insists that her primary duty was to travel among the disappointed Adventists and fight fanaticism:

It became my unpleasant duty to meet this [fanaticism], and we labored hard to suppress it. We had no part in it, only to bear a testimony decidedly against it wherever we met it....⁵³

The nominal Adventists charged me with fanaticism, and I was falsely, and by some, wickedly, represented as being the leader of the fanaticism that I was laboring to do away.⁵⁴

It would be unfair to find Mrs. White guilty of fanaticism merely because she continually associated with fanatics. After all, how could she fight fanatics without being where they were? However, the witnesses at Dammon's trial, along with independent documentation, suggest that she participated in some of the very activities she later denounced and remembered combatting (see box: "Fanaticism and Miss Harmon" p. 29).

Rebaptism

"Some had distressed spells (or pretended to) declaring it was the duty of some particular person to be baptized again," wrote John Cook to the editor of the *Morning Star*.⁵⁵ Cook, if he read the newspaper, may have had Ellen Harmon in mind. Because both friendly and unfriendly witnesses at Dammon's trial (quoted in the *Piscataquis Farmer*) testified that Miss Harmon presented some individuals visiting the James Ayer, Jr. home that Saturday evening with painful alternatives: they could undergo an icy baptism that very night or "go to hell." Loton Lambert informed the court that Harmon

told her vision to a cousin of mine, that she must be baptized that night or go to hell—she objected, because she had once been baptized.

Lambert further testified that Harmon

Contradicting Stories

Mrs. White's *Spiritual Gifts 2* account of the arrest and trial of Israel Dammon contradicts—on major and minor points—the testimony of both friendly and unfriendly witnesses and the court record as reported in the 7 March 1845 *Piscataquis Farmer*. Those contradictions are presented in adjacent columns below.

Mrs. Ellen G. White

(*Spiritual Gifts 2*, 1860)

The power of God was in that room, and the servants of God with their countenances lighted up with his glory, made no resistance.

They would move him a few inches only, and then rush out of the house. . . . The men could not endure the power of God, and it was a relief to them to rush out of the house.

Elder D. was held by the power of God about forty minutes, and not all the strength of those men could move him from the floor where he lay helpless.

A lawyer offered his services.

Many witnesses were brought to sustain the charge, but they were at once broken down by the testimony of Eld. D.'s acquaintances present. . . .

He was asked to give them [the court] a synopsis of his faith.

It was also suggested that they sung curious hymns, and he was asked to sing one.

Witnesses and trial record abridgment

(*Piscataquis Farmer* 7 March 1845)

Joseph Moulton: "When I went to arrest prisoner, . . . so great was the resistance, that I with three assistants, could not get him out. . . . We were resisted by both men and women."

"I remained in the house and sent for more help. . . ."

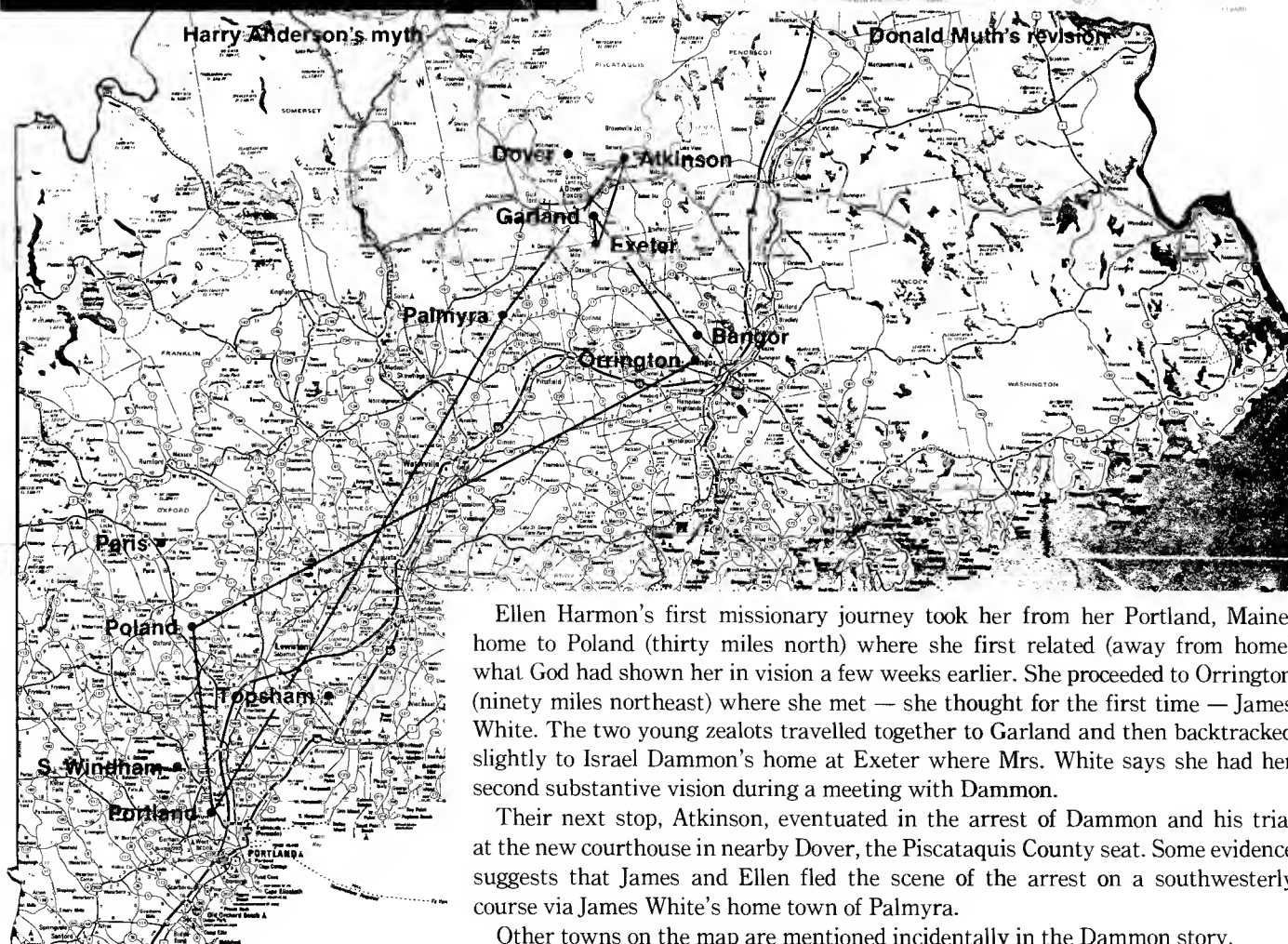
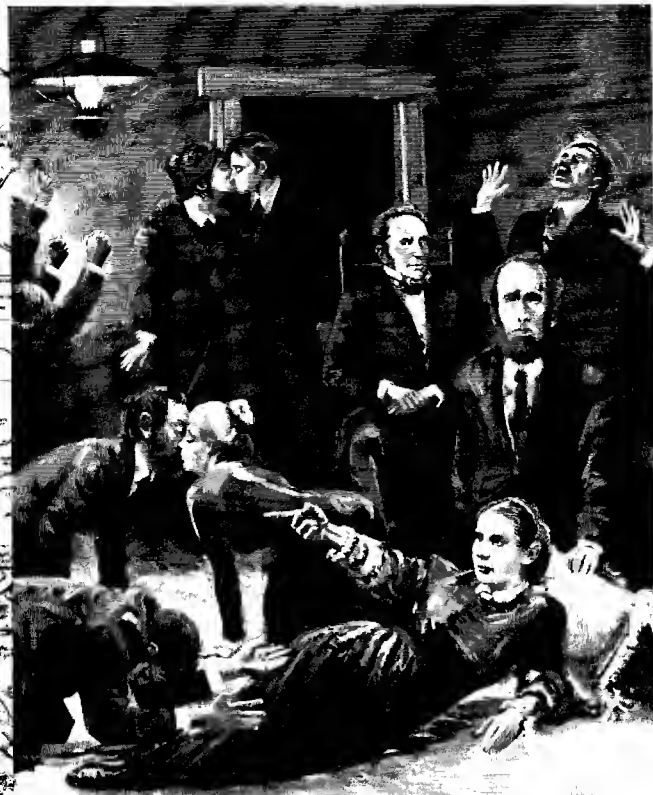
"We overpowered them and got him out door in custody."

Joel Doore, under cross-examination: "I did engage counsel in this case to defend the prisoner."

The Court after consultation sentenced the prisoner to the House of Correction for the space of Ten Days, . . .

Court indulged him to speak.

The prisoner and his witnesses asked permission, and sung as follows. . .



Ellen Harmon's first missionary journey took her from her Portland, Maine, home to Poland (thirty miles north) where she first related (away from home) what God had shown her in vision a few weeks earlier. She proceeded to Orrington (ninety miles northeast) where she met — she thought for the first time — James White. The two young zealots travelled together to Garland and then backtracked slightly to Israel Dammon's home at Exeter where Mrs. White says she had her second substantive vision during a meeting with Dammon.

Their next stop, Atkinson, eventuated in the arrest of Dammon and his trial at the new courthouse in nearby Dover, the Piscataquis County seat. Some evidence suggests that James and Ellen fled the scene of the arrest on a southwesterly course via James White's home town of Palmyra.

Other towns on the map are mentioned incidentally in the Dammon story.



James S.
Holmes, Esq.,
attorney
for the
defense.

From M. C. Lowell's Old Foxcroft



Charles P.
Chandler, Esq.,
attorney
for the
prosecution.

Courtesy, James B. Vickery collection

called Joel Doore, said he had doubted, and would not be baptized again—she said Br. Doore don't go to hell. Doore kneeled to her feet and prayed. (19:1)

Isley Osborn, a friendly witness, stated:

She told them their cases had been made known to her by the Lord, and if they were not baptized that evening, they would go to hell. We believed her. . . . (20:2)

On this point and at that time Ellen Harmon was no hypocrite. She was first baptized at the age of fourteen on June 26, 1842, in Casco Bay.⁶⁰ Later, James White wrote, she received "baptism at my hands, at an early period of her experience."⁶¹ And she preached from vision what she practiced—at least into 1850. On July 29 of that year, while in Oswego, New York, she had a vision that those who since 1844 had kept Sunday for the Sabbath

would have to go into the water and be baptized in the faith of the shut door and keeping the commandments of God and in the faith of Jesus coming to sit on the throne of his Father David and to redeem Israel.

I also saw those who have been baptized as a door into the professed churches will have to be baptized out of that door again, into the faith mentioned above, and all who have not been baptized since '44 will have to be baptized before Jesus comes and some will not gain progress now until that duty is done.⁶²

Later, Mrs. White backed away from both her Oswego Vision theology and her Atkinson meeting methodology:

Several . . . of our ministers I was shown were making a mistake . . . [by] making a test question of rebaptism. This is not the way that the subject should be treated. . . . These good brethren were not

She told them their cases had been made known to her by the Lord, and if they were not baptized that evening, they would go to hell.

bringing those newly come to the faith along step by step, cautiously and guardedly, and . . . some were turned from the truth, when a little time and tender, careful dealing with them would have prevented all such sad results.⁶³

The shut door⁶⁴

In 1845 Miss Harmon believed that probation had closed for "all the wicked world"⁶⁵ on October 22, 1844. She admitted in a letter to J.N.

Loughborough in 1874 that "after the time passed in '44, I did believe no more sinners would be converted." This is accurate. However, her next words suggest that the door was shut on both her memory and her theology:

I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted, and I am clear and free to state no one has ever heard me say or has read from my pen statements which will justify them in charges they have made against me upon this point.⁶²

The "they" who had made "charges" were four of Mrs. White's friends and acquaintances from the early days. They remembered her relationship to the shut door differently. Israel Dammon, of course, was there:

It has been some twenty years or more since we were associated with Mrs. W., but we remember very perfectly that her first visions, or vision, was told both by herself and others (especially by Mrs. W.) in connection with the preaching of the "shut door," and went to substantiate the same.⁶¹

The first time Ellen Harmon related her first vision away from her Portland home was in January of 1845 at Megquier Hill (pronounced Me-gweer) in Poland.⁶⁴ John Megquier remembered:

About the first visions that she had were at my house in Poland. She said God had told her in vision that the door of mercy had closed, and there was no more chance for the world, and she would tell who had got spots on their garments; and those spots were got on by questioning her visions, whether they were of the Lord or not.⁶⁵

Mrs. Lucinda S. Burdick met Ellen Harmon several times in 1845 at her uncle's house in South Windham, Maine. Mrs. Burdick recalled that during one of Miss Harmon's visions "her position upon the ground seemed so uncomfortable that I placed her head in my lap and supported her thus throughout the event."⁶⁶ Wrote Mrs. Burdick:

Ellen . . . said God had shown her in vision that Jesus Christ arose on the tenth day of the seventh month, 1844, and shut the door of mercy; had left forever the mediatorial throne; the whole world was doomed and lost, and there never could be another sinner saved.

. . . I have been told that they deny on this [west] coast that she ever saw the door of mercy closed; but there are thousands of living witnesses who know that a blacker lie could not be invented, and I am one of the number.⁶⁷

Pastor I.C. Wellcome, who was rebaptized by James White,⁶⁸ remembered that he "several times caught her [Miss Harmon], while [she was] falling to the floor, at times when she swooned away for a vision."

I have heard her relate her visions of these dates. Several were

published on sheets [he probably refers to the early broadside, *To the Little Remnant Scattered Abroad*]⁶⁹ to the effect that all were lost who did not endorse the '44 move, that Christ had left the throne of mercy, and all were sealed that ever would be, and no others could repent. She and James taught this one or two years.⁷⁰

Although these four witnesses contradict Mrs. White's 1874 statement in which she says "I never had a vision that no more sinners would be converted, and . . . no one has ever heard me say or has read from my pen" such statements, it is not a case of their word versus hers. It is Mrs. White versus Mrs. White. Twenty-seven years earlier—on July 13, 1847—while she still believed in an irrevocably shut door, Ellen White had written to Joseph Bates about a vision she had received in February of 1845 on her first missionary journey:

While in Exeter, Maine, in meeting with Israel Dammon, James, and many others, many of them did not believe in a shut door. . . . It was then I had a view of Jesus rising from His mediatorial throne and going to the holiest as Bridegroom to receive His kingdom. . . . Most of them received the vision and were settled upon the shut door.⁷¹

By 1883 Mrs. White not only denied having had a vision that "no more sinners would be converted," but she added the contradiction that her first visions had disabused the little band of their shut-door error:

For a time after the disappointment in 1844, I did hold, in common with the advent body, that the door of mercy was then forever closed to the world. This position was taken before my first vision was given me. It was the light given me of God that corrected our error, and enabled us to see the true position.⁷²

Damned to hell

Five times witnesses (two friendly and one unfriendly) at the Dammon trial attributed to Ellen Harmon the specific words "go to hell" as the option afforded individuals at the James Ayer, Jr., home who either would not "be baptized," "be baptized again," or "forsake all their friends." It is clear from her vision at Oswego, New York (29 July 1850), that Ellen White believed those who would not be rebaptized were lost. But some Adventists—who won't mind the unbiblical theology involved—ironically, might be troubled to learn that she would use the expression "go to hell."

In July of 1874 Mrs. Burdick recalled that Miss Harmon had used the expressions "doomed and damned" to describe the whole world after 1844, and to describe individuals "as ascribe as they took a stand against" her visions.⁷³ The next month, in a private letter to J.N. Loughborough, Mrs. White denied Burdick's statement:

I never have under any circumstances used this language to anyone, however sinful. I have ever had messages of reproof for those who used these harsh expressions. . . . I have never stated that this one or that one was doomed or damned. I never had a testimony of this kind for anyone. I have ever been shown that God's people should shun these strong expressions which are peculiar to the first-day Adventists.⁷⁴

In the third issue of *The Present Truth*, Ellen White appears to have slipped while recounting a vision and to have used one of those "strong expressions" so "peculiar to the first-day Adventists":

I saw that Satan was working through agents, in a number of ways. He was at work through ministers, who have rejected the truth [that October 22, 1844, was an eschatologically crucial date], and are given over to strong delusions to believe a lie that they might be damned.⁷⁵

Usually, however, Mrs. White got across the same message through euphemisms such as "spots on their garments,"⁷⁶ or "hearts . . . as black as ever,"⁷⁷ or "forever lost."⁷⁸

It does seem clear that Mrs. White was denying only the use of cer-

Fanaticism and Miss Harmon

Postdisappointment fanaticism

Evidence indicates Ellen Harmon—

Mandatory rebaptism	taught/participated.
Shut door	taught it from vision.
"Go to hell" (intemperate expressions)	used phrase repeatedly; trial witnesses agree.
The holy kiss	taught it from vision.
The holy laugh	described an instance of it affirmatively.
Mixed footwashing (women wash men's feet)	taught it from vision.
Shouting	participated actively.
Slain by the Spirit	fell on many occasions.
The dead are raised	denied this belief, and no evidence refutes her.
Time setting	does not deny it; early friends say she was.
No work doctrine	did not work; but says she fought this doctrine.

tain expressions; she did not deny having told individuals (or a class of people) that they were, or would be, lost. She was very clear that William Miller's associates, who did not maintain their faith in the shut door and adopt the seventh day Sabbath, were all lost.⁷⁹

In fact, the day following a vision given in late 1850 at Paris, Maine, she wrote of "Laodiceans" who had "said the shut door was of the devil, . . . They shall die the death." Why? Because, she explained, "the sin against the Holy Ghost was to ascribe to Satan . . . what the Holy Ghost has done."⁸⁰

The holy kiss

The New England populous was both amused and scandalized by newspaper accounts of the promiscuous public kissing that attended the home meetings of fanatical, postdisappointment Millerites. One paper reported a Millerite meeting in Portland at which

Brother M. stated that he had a special impression that he must kiss sister N. Her husband being present, thought such an impres-

It is clear from her vision at Oswego, New York, that Ellen White believed those who would not be rebaptized were forever lost.

sion must come from the Devil—as no good impression would expose his wife to be kissed by such an "ugly looking mug" as that brother were. So he took her away unknissed, and will probably keep her away.⁸¹

The subject of kissing came up repeatedly at the trial of Israel Dammon, with variations on the word (e.g., kiss, kissed, kissing) occurring

at least twenty-six times. Witnesses for the accused stoutly defended the practice.

One particular instance of this "exercise" that received so much attention at the trial had more the flavor of a make-up kiss than a holy kiss. Dorinda Baker, the other visionist present, approached Joel Doore saying, "You have refused me before." Doore recalled Miss Baker saying that he "had thought hard of her." Doore became "satisfied of my error, and . . . we kissed each other with the holy kiss." (21:1) Loton Lambert was watching and testified that Miss Baker had said, "that feels good." (19:2) Joel Doore remembered, "When she kissed me, she said there was light ahead." (21:1)

Job Moody testified that "kissing is a salutation of love . . . we have got positive scripture for it. . . ." (20:2) And Isley Osborn added, "It is a part of our faith." (20:3)

Ellen White later wrote in agreement. Including herself among the 144,000, she stated:

Then it was that the synagogue of Satan ["fallen Adventists," who had given up 1844 as a mistake, and "the nominal churches"]⁸⁷ knew that God loved us who could . . . *salute the brethren with a holy kiss*, and they worshipped at our feet.⁸⁸ (Curiously, the italicized words were omitted from the sixth edition of *Spiritual Gifts 2*.)

There are several appendix notes in the fifth edition of *Early Writings* (placed there in 1963 by the trustees of the Ellen G. White Estate) that are "provided to explain expressions and situations not so well understood now. . . ." The trustees write:

It was the custom among the early Sabbath keeping Adventists to exchange the holy kiss at the ordinance of humility. No reference is made to obvious impropriety of exchanging the holy kiss between men and women, but there is a call for all to abstain from all appearance of evil.⁸⁴

Perhaps the next edition of *Early Writings* will contain a rewrite of that appendix to "explain expressions and situations not so well understood" by the trustees in 1963.

James Ayer, Jr., the man in whose Atkinson home Dammon was arrested, witnessed to the court that "it is a part of our faith to kiss each other—brothers kiss sisters and sisters kiss brothers, I think we have biblical authority for that." (20:1) Mrs. White concurred, citing 1 Thessalonians 5:26.⁸⁵ In fact, all of the specific instances of kissing mentioned in the Dammon trial abridgment were kisses between members of the opposite sex: Joel Doore and Dorinda Baker, Israel Dammon and Mrs. Isley Osborn, and Dammon and Mrs. George S. Woodbury.

The holy laugh

Neither as biblical nor perhaps as controversial as the holy kiss, the "holy laugh" is mentioned in a *Bangor Whig and Courier* report of the arraignment of nine Millerites and in a list of postdisappointment Millerite fanatical manifestations contributed by a reader to the *Morning Star*.⁸⁶

In an August 1850 letter, Mrs. White seemed to acknowledge and affirm the holy laugh. James White had taken suddenly and seriously ill. Ellen, Sister Harris, Clarissa Bonfoey, and Ellen's sister, Sarah, who were alone with the sick man, united their prayers on his behalf:

Sister Harris and Clarissa were set entirely free and they prayed God with a loud voice. The spirit caused Clarissa to laugh aloud. James was healed every whit; . . .⁸⁷

It seems odd that when Mrs. White wrote this story for publication, she did not mention a charismatic prayer session nor did she indicate that "the spirit caused Clarissa to laugh aloud."⁸⁸

Promiscuous footwashing

Prosecution witness Jeremiah B. Green testified that he had witnessed footwashing during an earlier Millerite meeting at which "Elder Dammon was the presiding elder"; but he only "saw men wash men's

feet, and women wash women's feet." (19:3) John Gallison testified that "we do wash each other's feet"; (21:2) Jacob Mason referred to "wash[ing] feet in the evening"; (20:3) and Isley Osborn said they preferred "to go through the ordinance of washing feet in secret." (20:3)

Ellen White's footwashing practice in 1851 was more progressive than the trial record indicates was Dammon's 1845 protocol in Atkinson. Citing "duties . . . the performance of which will keep the people of God humble and separate from the world, and from backsliding, like the nominal churches," Mrs. White wrote: "I saw that the Lord had moved upon sisters to wash the feet of the brethren and that it was according to gospel order." But, she cautioned, "there is no example given in the Word for brethren to wash sisters' feet."⁸⁹

In her very first vision (December 1844), Ellen Harmon was shown that her enemies "knew that God had loved us who could wash one another's feet."⁹⁰ (This phrase also was deleted from the vision as published in 1860 in *Spiritual Gifts 2*.)

Voluntary humility (creeping)

Crawling was another exercise, intended to promote and demonstrate humility, that was in vogue at Dammon's meeting in Atkinson. John Doore testified on the witness stand that he had "seen both men and women crawl across the floor on their hands and knees." (21:1) And George S. Woodbury said, "My wife and Dammon passed across the floor on their hands and knees." (21:2)

A description of the creeping that took place at the home of Captain John Meguire in Poland, Maine, was provided by a correspondent of the *Norway Advertiser*:

They seldom sit in any other position than on the bare floor. . . . A woman, at the meeting he attended, got on her hands and knees, and crept over the floor like a child. A man, in the same position, followed her, butting her occasionally with his head. Another man threw himself at full length upon his back on the bed, and presently three women crossed him with their bodies.⁹¹

This creeping was a humiliation that—however literally biblical ("except ye become as little children" Matt. 18:1-6)—Ellen White, thirty years later, insisted she had not been prepared to bear:

Duties were made by men, tests manufactured that God had never required, and which found no sanction in His Word. I state definitely I never crept when I could walk, and have ever opposed it. I was shown in vision, after I refused to accept this as a duty, that it was not a requirement of God, but the fruit of fanaticism.⁹²

Mrs. White was reacting—although not publicly—to the remarks of Mrs. Lucinda Bodge Burdick published in an 1874 issue of *The World's Crisis*. Mrs. Burdick had become well acquainted with Ellen Harmon and James White when the three of them stayed together several times

"I saw that the Lord had moved upon sisters to wash the feet of the brethren and that it was according to gospel order." — Ellen G. White

in 1845 at the home of Josiah Little (Burdick's uncle) in South Windham, Maine, a few miles from Harmon's parent's home in Portland.⁹³ It was this 1874 statement by Burdick, published in *The World's Crisis*, that Mrs. White objected to so strongly:

At the time of my first acquaintance with them [James White and Ellen Harmon in "early 1845"] they were in a wild fanaticism,—used to sit on the floor instead of chairs, and creep around the floor like little children. Such freaks were considered a mark of humility.⁹⁴

Although the absence of independent, contemporary evidence on

this point leaves the 1874 statements of Mrs. White and Mrs. Burdick in apparently unresolvable tension, the uncommitted reader will have to give Burdick the edge because of Mrs. White's unwillingness to make a public refutation.⁹⁵

Shouting

The incoherent din that marked the proceedings at the Ayer household on the night before Israel Dammon's arrest was not unusual for a Millerite home meeting. Defense witness Joel Doore minimized the

Mrs. White's Weak References

At the end of *Spiritual Gifts 2*, the only publication in which Ellen White tells the Israel Dammon story, there are fifteen lists of individuals whose names are published as vouching for various segments of Mrs. White's autobiographical sketches.

Of these fifteen lists, five pertain specifically to events she experienced in the state of Maine (including the Dammon incident in Atkinson) during the first fifteen to eighteen months of her public ministry (roughly January 1845 to June 1846). These five lists of testimonials include sixty-one entries; but when they are sifted for repetition, thirty-eight different names remain.

By examining the 1850 United States Census Bureau records for Maine, and reviewing dozens of Maine local histories housed at the Library of Congress, I was able to identify twenty-eight of the thirty-eight individuals (73 percent) printed on the five lists. (Three or four others have been identified only tentatively.)

Twenty of the twenty-eight witnesses (71 percent) I was able to identify were from five families. Nine of the twenty-eight were sixteen-years-old or younger (the youngest being six) when the time passed in 1844. Two were charged in 1845 with vagrancy and/or disturbing the peace. Two others were deceased before 1859 or 1860 when the lists probably were compiled. One of those, Uriah Smith's father-in-law, Cyprian Stevens, died on September 6, 1858, five days after being bitten by a rattlesnake.

It seems surprising that eight (or 29 percent) of the twenty-eight individuals I was able to identify were strongly denounced by Mrs. White in 1860—the same year that she published their names—for fanaticism and for not receiving her visions, including Cyprian Stevens' daughter, Harriet (Mrs. Uriah) Smith:

Harriet, I was carried back and shown that there has never been a reception of the visions given in Paris. . . . I was pointed back, away back to the time when those in Paris, especially Brn. Andrews' and Stevens' families were ensnared in error, and for years were in a perfect deception of Satan. They suffered while in this error, but they will never obtain a particle of reward for it. If they had been willing to be taught, and receive light in God's appointed way, they would not have been held in error, fanaticism and darkness all that length of time. ("To Brother J.N. Andrews and Sister H.N. Smith," W58, 1860, Advent Source Collection, pp. 7 & 10.)

The lists of names at the end of *Spiritual Gifts 2* vouching for Mrs. White's stories were discussed in 1874 by Isaac Wellcome in his *History of the Second Advent Message and Mission, Doctrine and People*, page 408:

The most of these signers were as deeply in fanaticism as [James and Ellen White] themselves; some were leading ones. But signers who had *not been personally associated* in the fanaticism being scarce, to certify in these prepared papers, the names of two young ladies (perhaps more) are added, who, *at the time specified for the events*, were aged, respectively, nine and fourteen years. Prodigies in intellect and judgment, surely, or, perhaps, endowed with the "gift of discerning of spirits." But it is no difficult task to procure the names of partisans, associates, accomplices, their children, cousins, and aunts, to certify to one's rectitude, sanity, or orthodoxy. It is more safe and important, however, to have a good "record in heaven."

Of the five lists of names under scrutiny, one list was made up

of five individuals who were supposed to have signed the following statement:

We bear cheerful testimony to the truthfulness of the statements relative to Elder Dammon, on pages 40, 41 [of *Spiritual Gifts 2*]. As near as we can recollect we believe the circumstances of his arrest and trial to be fairly stated.

	H.A. Hannaford,
Wm. T. Hannaford,	D.S. Hannaford,
James Ayer, Sen.,	Mrs. R.W. Wood.

As references go, this list of five is not very impressive. None of the five were witness at Dammon's trial. James Ayer, Jr., owned the home in which Dammon's arrest took place and he did testify at the trial. But it is his father who was seventy-two at the time of the incident, and eighty-seven when *Spiritual Gifts 2* was published, whose signature apparently was obtained.

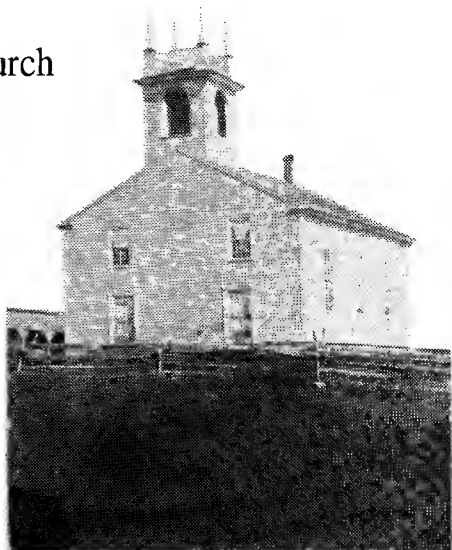
The remaining four witnesses resided in Orrington, across the Penobscot River from Bangor. The four were sufficiently close neighbors to be included on the same page of the 1850 federal census. Laborer William Hannaford, his wife, Dorcas, and their daughter, Hester A., comprised three of the four Orrington testimonials. They were ages forty-three, forty, and sixteen, respectively, in 1845. It is quite possible that William was the Mr. Hannaford who figured reluctantly in a 28 March 1845 report from a *Piscataquis Farmer* correspondent in Atkinson:

The Millerites have been collecting for the past four days and held their meetings at the house of Mr. James Ayer, Jr., in the southwest part of this town. All secular business has been suspended by them, to await the coming of the Lord, which they say will take place on the 4th day of April next. From 10 to 15 have been baptised daily, many of them six or eight times each. Last evening a party of Indians or anti-Routers arrived on the ground about nine o'clock, and upon being refused admittance, burst open the doors and took the Millerites belonging out of town and carried them off with them. They harnessed Mr. Ayer's horse to a sled, and packed on a load, and pressed a Mr. Hannaford one of their number to drive the team through the woods to Dead Stream, about five miles distant, where they intended to deposit them—and I understand they have threatened to tar and feather them in case they continue to hold their meetings any more.

The final name published as vouching for Mrs. White's account of Dammon's arrest and trial, a Mrs. R.W. Wood, was twenty-three in 1845 and married to a twenty-nine year old farmer named Newall Wood (probably the Brother Wood mentioned at the trial). A troubling reference to Mrs. Wood's *Spiritual Gifts 2* testimonial appears on page 117 of E.S. Ballenger's unfinished manuscript entitled "Early History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church":

In a private letter dated May 16, 1888, Mrs. Wood denies that she ever signed this statement and she did not know that her name was attached to it until many years after. She also denies the accuracy of Mrs. White's statements regarding the [Dammon] affair. She was present and remembered the experience very well, and her account does not agree with Mrs. White's account. If they will forge Mrs. Wood's name to a document they would forge other names; therefore we have good reason for doubting the value of their testimonials.

Universalist church where Israel Dammon was arraigned.



Courtesy, James B. Vickery collection

volume: "There was not one tenth part of the noise Saturday evening, that there generally is at the meetings I attend." (21:1) But it was loud enough to astonish the prosecution witnesses.

William C. Crosby described it as "exceedingly noisy." "They would at times all be talking at once, halloing at the top of their voices." In fact, he added, "by spells it was the most noisy assembly I ever attended.... I don't say Dammon shouted the loudest; I think some stronger in the lungs than he." (19:3)

Dammon's shouting was not limited to the Saturday night meeting: "Tuesday morning the prisoner having taken his seat, rose just as the Court came in, and shouted Glory to the strength of his lungs." (22:2)

Ellen Harmon, and Ellen White up to at least the age of twenty-five or thirty, would have appreciated Dammon's outburst had she been there: "Singing, I saw, often drove away the enemy and shouting would beat him back. I saw that pride had crept in among you, and there was not childlike simplicity among you."⁹⁶

Ellen White's letters, from 1853 and previously, indicate her early support for unreserved worship. She admonished one Adventist congregation in 1850: "I saw you should rise together, and unitedly get the victory over the powers of darkness and sing and shout to the glory of God."⁹⁷ "I saw there was too little glorying God, too little childlike simplicity among the remnant."⁹⁸

On November 7, 1850, Ellen White described a conference she had recently attended of twenty-eight Adventists at Topsham, Maine:

Sunday the power of God came upon us like a mighty rushing wind. All arose upon their feet and praised God with a loud voice.... The voice of weeping could not be told from the voice of shouting. It was a triumphant time.... I never witnessed such a powerful time before.⁹⁹

In late 1851 James White wrote of a "powerful vision" that "had a mighty effect. Ellen came out of vision," he said, "then shouted till she went off in vision again."¹⁰⁰

According to Ron Graybill, "In the 1870s, feeling still ran high on some occasions"; and he quotes from an Ellen White letter to her boys in 1872:

The blessing and power of God rested upon your father and mother. We both fell to the floor. Your father, as he rose upon his feet to praise God, could not stand. The blessing of God rested upon him with remarkable power.... Elder Loughborough felt the power of God all through his body. The room seemed holy.... We shouted the high praises of God.¹⁰¹

But by 1874 Mrs. White had lost much of her "childlike simplicity." She recalled somewhat censoriously an early 1845 meeting in Orrington, Maine, a few weeks after Dammon's trial, at which she had

reprimanded fanatics for their "shouting and hallooing." Just before she left Orrington, a few assembled with her, she said; and "God was worshipped without boisterous noise and confusion, but with calm dignity."¹⁰²

By 1900 Mrs. White's memory had joined her childlike simplicity:

I bore my testimony, declaring that these fanatical movements, this din and noise, were inspired by the spirit of Satan, who was working miracles to deceive if possible the very elect.¹⁰³

"Slain by the Spirit"

Nine Millerites were arraigned before the Bangor, Maine, police court on 2 April 1845, charged with being

Idlers and Vagrants and disturbers of the public peace, and sentenced to the House of Correction for a term of time varying from five to thirty days. These trials caused great excitement and the City Hall was crowded to its utmost capacity....

There was evidently a misunderstanding among the spectators, of many of the technical terms in use among the Adventists... such as "salute," "embrace," "slain upon the floor," "shouting," "laughing," &c. Whenever these terms occurred in the testimony, they created much merriment.... This was especially the case when the acts which these terms express were described.¹⁰⁴

The expression "slain upon the floor" or "slain by the Spirit" was used to designate a sudden and total loss of physical strength that sometimes overcame Millerites during their ecstatic worship services.

Isaac Wellcome, a minister of the Advent Christian Church and author of *History of the Second Advent Message*, "was often in meeting with Ellen G. Harmon and James White in 1843 and 45."¹⁰⁵ Wellcome recalled Miss Harmon's actions:

She was strangely exercised in body and mind, usually talking in assemblies until nature was exhausted and then falling to the floor, unless caught by someone sitting near (we remember catching her twice to save her from falling upon the floor), remaining a considerable time in the mesmeric state, and afterwards, perhaps not until another meeting, she would relate the wonders which she claimed had been shown her in spirit....¹⁰⁶

Reacting privately in 1874 to Wellcome's testimony, Mrs. White wrote:

It might have been, but I have no acquaintance with him, and never knew him by sight. Before '44, I sometimes lost my strength under the blessing of God. I.C. Wellcome may have confounded these exercises of the power of the Spirit of God upon me with the visions.¹⁰⁷

Mrs. White seemed to be trying to say that while she had visions after 1844, she was not thereafter "so overpowered by the Spirit of God as to lose all strength...."¹⁰⁸ Arthur White does not agree. And, for evidence, he quotes from his grandmother's account of an experience she had "several days" after her second vision. As Father Pearson was praying for her, Mrs. White remembered: "My strength was taken away, and I fell to the floor. I seemed to be in the presence of the angels."¹⁰⁹

In 1847 Mrs. White described how she "fell from my chair to the floor," at the onset of her third vision (February 1845); "and a short time after I fell," Sister Durben "was struck down" by "the power of the Lord."¹¹⁰

"Such experiences were repeated again and again," says Arthur White, who has had the opportunity to browse for decades through tens of thousands of pages of Mrs. White's unpublished letters and manuscripts.¹¹¹

Limited-access policies of the Ellen White Estate force us to leave the disagreement on this point between Mrs. White and her grandson unresolved. But Mrs. White's belief that others around her were being slain by the Spirit throughout the late 1840s has been clearly demon-

strated by her descendent and by former associate secretary of the White Estate Ron Graybill.¹¹²

Also, it is clear that whether she was “slain upon the floor” (in or out of vision) during her early travels, Ellen Harmon spent a lot of time ministering prone from the floor. In Atkinson, on the evening of 15 February 1845, according to witness Loton Lambert, she lay on the floor having and telling visions for more than five hours. (19:2) Jacob Mason testified that James White “some of the time . . . held her head.” (20:3)

Later, Lucinda Burdick recalled that in the autumn of 1845 on a Sunday afternoon in South Windham, in a grove near the home of Andrew Bodge, that “suddenly, Ellen Harmon became rigidly prostrate upon the ground Her position upon the ground seemed so uncomfortable that I placed her head in my lap and supported her thus throughout the event.”¹¹³

Months later, in Randolph, Massachusetts, Ellen Harmon spent most of four hours “in vision . . . inclined backward against the wall in the corner of the room.” Mrs. White was quoting Otis Nichols for her description of that session, except that where he described her “talking in vision with a shrill voice,” she changed the word “shrill” to “clear.”¹¹⁴

The dead are raised

In 1874 Mrs. White recalled encountering and rebuking fanatics at Orrington in the summer of 1845, who “believe[d] the dead are raised,” and telling them “I know this is all a delusion.” She also recalled that at Garland in 1845 “Elder Dammon and many others . . . were in error and delusion in believing that the dead had been raised.”

While I was repeating this Scripture, Elder Damon [sic] arose and began to leap up and down, crying out, “The dead are raised and gone up; glory to God! Glory, Hallelujah!” Others followed his example, Elder Dammon said, “. . . I cannot sit still. The spirit and power of the resurrection is stirring my very soul.”

“Our testimony,” Mrs. White recalled, “was rejected, and they clung tenaciously to their errors.” “Elder Dammon . . . became my enemy only because I bore a testimony reproving his wrongs and his fanatical course”¹¹⁵

Ellen Harmon may never have taught, as Dammon did, that the dead are raised. But it is difficult to believe that she strongly rebuked those (especially Dammon) who did believe it. Although Mrs. White wrote in 1860 that “distracting influences” had “separated Eld. D. from his friends who believe the third message,” she recalled that Dammon

Dammon’s travels with the married Whites would have followed their wedding, more than a year after he became Mrs. White’s “enemy.”

joined with her at Topsham in the healing of Frances Howland, some time after his Atkinson arrest:

Bro. D. cried out in the Spirit, and power of God, “Is there some sister here who has faith enough to go and take her by the hand, and bid her arise in the name of the Lord?”¹¹⁶

If Dammon became Mrs. White’s “enemy” over her rebuke (in the spring or summer of 1845) of his fanatical belief that the dead were being raised, it seems odd that both Joseph Bates and R.S. Webber placed Israel Dammon in the wagon with Elder and Mrs. White and Bates, behind a “refractory colt,” shortly after the November 1846 Topsham meeting at which Mrs. White had the vision of the planets, that convinced Bates her visions were genuine.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, Uriah Smith, J.N. Andrews, and G.H. Bell substantiate references “to Eld. Damman [sic] as . . . having traveled with Bro. and Sr. White, and [having] been well acquainted with their early labors.”¹¹⁸ Dammon’s travels with the married Whites would have followed their wedding on August

Dover
courthouse
where Israel
Dammon
was tried.



Courtesy, James B. Vickery collection

30, 1846, more than a year after he became Mrs. White’s “enemy.”

What Ron Graybill wrote about Mrs. White’s memory of her childhood—“she consistently dates events . . . too early”—appears to be true for her early adulthood as well.¹¹⁹

Time setting

The lessons to be learned from the uneventful passing of firm dates set by William Miller’s followers in 1843 and 1844 for the second coming of Christ were lost—for varying lengths of time—on those Adventists who were later to be seen as pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. O.R.L. Crosier, James White, and Joseph Bates all set dates after 1844 for the Lord’s return—each later than the other.¹²⁰

Ellen Harmon may well have been among the time setters of 1845. John Cook wrote on 5 April 1845 that some Millerites “were confirmed in the belief that the appointed time was the 4th day of April, on account of the visions (?) of a girl.”

In these exercises she wrote with her finger on her hand April 4th, 1845, and then counted over her fingers each one for a day from the time of the vision (so called) to the 4th of April.¹²¹

Mrs. Burdick was very specific in her personal memory of Ellen Harmon’s time setting:

At one time, she saw that the Lord would come the second time in June, 1845. The prophecy was discussed in all the churches, and in a little “shut-door paper” published in Portland, Me. During the summer, after June passed, I heard a friend ask her how she accounted for the vision? She replied that “they told her in the language of Canaan, and she did not understand the language; that it was the next September that the Lord was coming, and the second growth of grass instead of the first in June.”¹²²

Mrs. Burdick’s statement was published in the July 1, 1874 issue of *The World’s Crisis*. Two months later, Ellen White privately denied all of Mrs. Burdick’s claims (and there were several)—except her statement regarding time setting.¹²³

In 1847, James White claimed that Miss Harmon had experienced a vision a few days before October 22, 1845, that indicated “we would be disappointed” again.¹²⁴ True or not,¹²⁵ Ellen, like James, continued to believe that Jesus’ second coming was truly imminent. This belief delayed both their effort “to try to convert people to the advent faith” and their ability to see “that the way . . . [was] made plain” for them to marry.¹²⁶

Even after she surrendered the notion of time setting, Mrs. White had trouble admitting that those who had done so during the Millerite period were really, biblically, mistaken (see *Early Writings*, pp. 232-237).

But whether or not she was setting specific dates for the Lord’s return in 1845, during the 1850s Mrs. White was placing clear limits on God’s timetable. In a 27 June 1850 vision, she was told that “now time is almost finished.” Her “accompanying angel” indicated that “those

who have of late embraced the third angel's message" would "have to learn in a few months" "what we have been years learning."¹²⁷

At an early morning meeting in Battle Creek in late May 1856 Mrs. White stated:

I was shown the company present at the Conference. Said the angel: "Some food for worms, some subjects of the seven last plagues, some will be alive and remain upon the earth to be translated at the coming of Jesus." Solemn words were these, spoken by the angel....¹²⁸

Mrs. White did not (and logically could not) live to see her prophecy fail.

No work

While some of the Millerites annoyed their fellow citizens by crawling in public places,¹²⁹ and others disturbed their neighbors (as Noah Lunt did) with late night warnings under their windows,¹³⁰ it was primarily the no-work teaching and practice that caused civil authorities to place fanatical Millerites under guardianship or, for brief periods, in jail.¹³¹

These actions were taken in the best interest of both the community and the individuals arrested. Atkinson, where Dammon was apprehended, was little more than a village. In 1850 its population numbered 895—474 men and 421 women.¹³² When a few individuals left their crops to rot, their cows unmilked, their chickens unfed, or failed to show up somewhere for work, the impact on the tiny community was severe. The *Bangor Whig and Courier* reported:

An industrious farmer, living in Orrington [35 miles southeast of Atkinson] who has for several years, supplied customers in this city [Bangor—five miles from Orrington] with milk has recently.... abandon[ed] selling milk... to... make earnest preparation for the immediate end of the world. He has not since waited upon his customers....¹³³

The Selectmen of Orrington placed several Millerites under guardianship in February 1845 and cautioned the public "against purchasing any property, real or personal of them, as all contracts or deeds will be void on account of their incompetency to manage their affairs."¹³⁴ These legal actions began too late to save some Adventists from "expos[ing] themselves and their families to the peltings of the pitiless storm of poverty."¹³⁵

The Adventists' theological misjudgment left many of them and their children to the mercy of generous and more farsighted neighbors. Mrs. M.C. Stowell Crawford recalled:

After the time passed [1844] there were several large families that father had to supply with everything. He would purchase eight barrels of flour at a time.¹³⁶

Ellen Harmon appears to have lived (but perhaps not taught) the no-work fanaticism of Millerite leaders such as Jesse Stevens, Joseph Turner, and Dammon. The no-work doctrine—like the shut-door teaching—was the logical outgrowth of sincere belief in the imminent return of Christ. While Miss Harmon was certain that no sinners could be brought to Christ, she did believe that the saved could lose their faith and thereby their salvation while the Bridegroom tarried (Matthew 25).

The *Piscataquis Farmer* account of the Dammon trial and some of Mrs. White's own memory statements indicate her preoccupation with the mortal sin of doubt.¹³⁷ Prosecution witness William Crosby testified: "After the visionist called them up she told them they doubted. Her object seemed to be to convince them they must not doubt." (19:2)

Neither Ellen Harmon nor Ellen White believed that anyone could be saved who had once believed in the 1844 movement and then gave it up—except William Miller.¹³⁸ And so those who believed their Saviour would appear momentarily had only two responsibilities: one, to keep the faith; and, two, to bolster the faith of their brethren.

By her own estimate, Ellen Harmon "journeyed for three months" during the winter/spring of 1845 encouraging the scattered flock of dis-

couraged Millerites with what the Lord had shown her in vision.¹³⁹ Yet "financial resources for her journey did not concern her," says Arthur White, because "she had now assumed a confident trust in God."¹⁴⁰ But so, of course, had those like Dammon, Stevens, and Turner, who advocated the no-work doctrine, "assumed a confident trust in God."

During her travels Miss Harmon was transported, fed, and boarded by new-found friends. The Nichols family boarded her for eight months (between August 1845 and June 1846) at their home near Roxbury, Massachusetts.¹⁴¹ Mrs. White remembered that "they were attentive to my wants, and generously supplied me with means to travel."¹⁴²

While Ellen Harmon herself did not work, she remembers laboring strenuously with those in Paris, Maine, "who believed that it was a sin to work."

The Lord gave me a reproof for the leader [Jesse Stevens] in this error, declaring that he was going contrary to the Word of God in abstaining from labor, [and] in urging his errors upon others....¹⁴³

Stevens rejected Harmon's counsel; and she recalled having seen, before the fact, "that his career would soon close." "At length," she wrote, "he made a rope of some of his bed clothing with which he hung himself."¹⁴⁴

It may be that Ellen Harmon was speaking out against the no-work doctrine in 1845, but a subsequent issue of *Adventist Currents* will demonstrate just how unlikely it is that Jesse Steven's suicide was related to his rejection of her counsel.

Was Ellen Harmon arrested?

Was Ellen Harmon arrested in 1845 for her fanatical behavior? Otis Nichols, writing to William Miller in April 1846, said that

there have been a number of warrants for her arrest, but God has signally protected her. At one time a sheriff and a number of men with him had no power over her person for an hour and a half, although they exerted all their bodily strength to move her, while she or no one else made any resistance.¹⁴⁵

Arthur White believes that Nichols was confusing Ellen Harmon with Israel Dammon,¹⁴⁶ even though Nichols—writing within months of the alleged arrest attempt—had reason to tell Miller, "What I have written I have knowledge of and think I can judge correctly." Why? "Sister Ellen has been a resident of my family much of the time for about eight months."¹⁴⁷

Whether or not Nichols was confused, Arthur White proceeds on his next *Early Years* page to confuse the "hour and a half" that Nichols says the sheriff and his men spent trying to arrest Miss Harmon with his

One of the leaders, well known as Joe Turner, another named Harmon,... were arrested at the house of Mr. Megquier, in Portland,...

own account of the Dammon arrest—even though Arthur's only source for the Atkinson incident is his grandmother who was there and says Dammon's arrest took forty minutes.¹⁴⁸

The most tantalizing piece of this puzzle is found in an April 1845 issue of the *Daily Eastern Argus*, a newspaper from Miss Harmon's home town of Portland:

Millerism. The proceedings of the professors of this belief, have been such, that the officers of Norway and some other towns in the vicinity have felt it their duty to take means to put a stop to them.... On Wednesday [April 23], one of the leaders, well known as Joe Turner, another named Harmon, with one or two others were arrested at the house of Mr. Megquier, in Poland, by the Selectmen of that town, as was reported....¹⁴⁹

Mrs. White remembered that she initially related her first vision away from home in Poland,¹⁵⁰ in (Otis Nichols says) January 1845.¹⁵¹ And John Megquier, at whose house Turner and Harmon were arrested, remembered that “about the first visions that she had were at my house in Poland.”¹⁵² By her own account she was in Poland on two occasions during the winter/spring of 1845. And her second visit to that town came after her initial, three-month journey east, which began

The records suggest that it would have been convenient for Miss Harmon to have been at John Megquier’s house on April 23, 1845, in Poland.

sometime in January.¹⁵³ The records, the date, the geography, and the relationships, suggest that it would have been convenient for Miss Harmon to be at John Megquier’s house on April 23, 1845, in Poland, Maine.

Added to all of this, Miss Harmon was a friend and admirer of the arrested Joseph Turner. In 1847 she described to Joseph Bates her great relief upon learning that the shut-door position that she received from her first vision was compatible with what Turner was teaching from Scripture.¹⁵⁴ And so it would not be surprising to find them together in late April 1845, at a popular Millerite gathering spot—the home of John Megquier.

Thirty years later Mrs. White remembered being shown in advance

that we would be in danger of imprisonment and abuse.

....the emissaries [sic] of Satan were on our track, and we would fare no better than those who had been fanatical and wrong, and suffered the consequences of their inconsistent, unreasonable course by abuse and imprisonment.¹⁵⁵

Three paragraphs after seeming to predict her own imprisonment, she writes of

brethren believing the truth... [who] were imprisoned and beaten.

But we rode through these very places in broad daylight, visited from house to house, held meetings, and bore our testimony. . . .¹⁵⁶

There is presently not available sufficient evidence to indicate conclusively whether or not Ellen was the Harmon who was arrested along with Joseph Turner in Poland, Maine, on April 23, 1845.

Conclusion

Most Adventists who learn of it will probably be able to accommodate the revised image of Ellen Harmon as a “shrill”-voiced, lounging, shouting, kissing, condemning, fainting, and footwashing, postdisappointment, Millerite fanatic. It may take some Adventists a little longer to assimilate the implications of Mrs. White’s inability to remember her early ministry the way it actually took place. They will either have to assume that she possessed a particularly fecund delusional system, as Jack Provonsha does,¹⁵⁷ or that she consciously distorted the past for her own (however complicated and even, perhaps, well-intended) purposes.

Those who have the fortitude and the wits will recognize what the implications are for so many other stories of Providence that dot the landscape of Adventist history. And it will become easier to identify with A.G. Daniells’ question at the 1919 Bible Conference about “just how much of that is genuine, and how much has crawled into the story?”¹⁵⁸

It was Ellen White who advised that it is only as we see how the Lord has led us in the past that we can set our faces courageously and confidently to the future.¹⁵⁹ Can Adventists be blamed then for moving forward timorously? Because it is becoming increasingly clear that Mrs. White did not leave us a credible picture of her pivotal place in our religious roots. □

ENDNOTES

1. Ellen G. White *Spiritual Gifts* 2 (James White, Battle Creek, MI. 1860).
2. Ellen G. White to J.N. Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
3. “Trial of Elder I. Dammon,” *Piscataquis Farmer*, 7 March 1845.
4. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:40, 41, 42.
5. Otis Nichols to William Miller, 20 April 1846. Arthur White, in his book, *The Early Years*, p.75, quotes Nichols; but he arbitrarily changes Nichols’ “(January, 1845)” to “[February, 1845].” In so doing White also contradicts his own “mid-January” statement, from *The Early Years*, p. 65.
6. Ellen G. White, *Life Sketches* (Steam Press, Battle Creek, MI.: 1880):72.
7. *Bangor Whig and Courier*, 26 October 1842.
8. *Daily Eastern Argus*, 13 March 1845.
9. Dorinda Baker: *Piscataquis Farmer*, 7 March 1845; Emily C. Clemons: J.V. Himes to William Miller, 12 and 29 March 1845, as quoted in Ronald Numbers, *Prophetess of Health* (Harper & Row, New York, N.Y.: 1976):17; Mary Hamlin: M.C. Stowell Crawford to Ellen White, 9 October 1908; Phoebe Knapp: White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
10. *Daily Eastern Argus*, 28 April & 28 May 1845; *Oxford Democrat*, 8 April & 18 November 1845; *The Norway Advertiser*, 28 March 1845; *The Bangor Whig & Courier*, 19 February and 5 March 1845; “Letter from Bro. White,” *Day-Star*, 6 September 1845.
11. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
12. Otis Nichols to William Miller, 20 April 1846; *Daily Eastern Argus*, 28 April 1845.
13. *Piscataquis Farmer*, 25 March 1845.
14. Meteorological journal for Bangor, ME., February 1845. National Archives microfilm.
15. *Piscataquis Farmer*, 7 March 1845.
16. This is deduced from the location of James Ayer, Jr.’s, home as given in the *Piscataquis Farmer*, 25 March 1845; an 1880 atlas of Atkinson; and a description of the size and location of Dead Stream and its branches in “Atkinson”—chapter XI of Amasa Loring’s, *History of Piscataquis County* (Hoyt, Fogg & Donham, Portland, ME.: 1880):89.
17. *Piscataquis Farmer*, 7 March 1845.
18. *Oxford Democrat*, 1 April 1845.
19. *Piscataquis Farmer*, 7 March 1845.
20. United States Census, 1850, Piscataquis County, Maine.
21. *Piscataquis Farmer*, 7 March 1845.
22. *Maine Register*, 1843, p.63.
23. Paul Gordon to Ingemar Linden, 17 February 1987.
24. *Ibid.*
25. *Ibid.*
26. Israel Dammon to Samuel S. Snow, 28 May 1845, published in *The Jubilee Standard* 1 (5 June 1845):104.
27. John F. Sprague, Esq., “James Stuart Holmes, The Pioneer Lawyer of Piscataquis County,” *The Bangor Historical Magazine* IV (July 1888—June 1889):34.
28. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:38,39,40.
29. Sprague, “Holmes, The Pioneer Lawyer,” 35.
30. “Scandal or Rite of Passage? Historians on the Dammon Trial,” *Spectrum* 17 (August 1987):44.
31. White, *Life Sketches*, 38, 39.
32. Ellen White, *Early Writings* (Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., Battle Creek, MI.: 1882):15.
33. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:38-40.
34. *Ibid.*, p.39.
35. Ellen White to Joseph Bates, 13 July 1847. This letter is photographically reproduced in Ellen White’s handwriting in *Adventist Currents* 1 (July 1984):13-15.
36. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:38; *Life Sketches*, 73.
37. O.R.L. Crosier, “Prophetic Day and Hour,” *The Voice of Truth and Glad Tidings* (9 April 1845):15.
38. *Piscataquis Farmer*, 25 March 1845.
39. *Oxford Democrat*, 1 April 1845.
40. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:39.
41. *Ibid.*, 40.
42. *Ibid.*, 40.
43. “Scandal or Rite of Passage,” *Spectrum*, 44.
44. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:42.
45. *Ibid.*, 39.

46. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874; *Spiritual Gifts* 2:46.
47. James White to "Dear Bro. Jacobs," 19 August 1845, published in *The Day-Star* 7 (6 September 1845).
48. James White to "My Dear Brother Collins," 26 August 1846.
49. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:40,41.
50. Ibid, 41.
51. Ibid.
52. Ibid, 42.
53. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
54. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:58.
55. John Cook, 5 April 1845 letter to the editor, *Morning Star*, 16 April 1845.
56. *SDA Encyclopedia* (Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., Wash., D.C.:1976):1585.
57. James White, *Life Incidents* (Steam Press, Battle Creek, MI.:1868):273.
58. Ellen White, Oswego vision, 29 July 1850 (Advent Source Collection).
59. Ellen White to G.I. Butler, 13 December 1886, quoted in *Evangelism*, 375.
60. For a parsimonious discussion of the shut-door problem, see *Adventist Currents* 1:4 (July 1984).
61. Ellen White, *A Word to the Little Flock* (30 May 1847):14.
62. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
63. Israel Dammon, *The World's Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
64. Arthur L. White, *The Early Years* (Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., Wash., D.C.:1985):65, referencing Letter 37, 1890.
65. John Megquier, *The World's Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
66. Lucinda S. Burdick, notarized statement, 26 September 1908.
67. Lucinda S. Burdick, *The World's Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
68. Isaac C. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message*, (Isaac C. Wellcome, Yarmouth, ME.:1874):403.
69. James White, publisher, 6 April 1846.
70. Isaac C. Wellcome, *The World's Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
71. This letter is reproduced in Ellen White's handwriting in *Adventist Currents* 1(July 1984):13-15.
72. Ellen White, *Selected Messages* 1 (Review & Herald Publishing Association, Wash., D.C.:1958):63.
73. Burdick, *Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
74. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
75. Ellen White, *The Present Truth* 1 (August 1849):21,22.
76. Megquier, *Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
77. White, *The Present Truth* 1 (August 1849):22.
78. White to Eli Curtis, *A Word to the Little Flock* (30 May 1847):12.
79. White, *Early Writings*, 257,258.
80. Ellen White vision given 24 December 1850, written 25 December 1850, published in *Adventist Currents* 1 (June 1985):9.
81. *Piscataquis Farmer*, 4 April 1845.
82. James White, *Day-Star*, 6 September 1845; Ellen White, *Spiritual Gifts* 1, 171, 172.
83. White, *Early Writings*, 15; or *Spiritual Gifts* 2:32.
84. White, *Early Writings*, appendix, 302.
85. White, *Early Writings*, 117.
86. *Bangor Whig and Courier*, 3 April 1845; John Cook to Bro. Burr, 5 April 1845, letter published in *Morning Star*, 16 April 1845.
87. Ellen White to Bro. and Sis. Howland, 15 August 1850.
88. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2 (1860):138; *Life Sketches* (1880):274; *Life Sketches* (1915):137.
89. White, *Early Writings*, 116,117.
90. Ibid, 15.
91. *Norway Advertiser*, 28 March 1845.
92. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
93. Burdick, notarized statement, 26 September 1908.
94. Burdick, *Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
95. Mrs. White should have directed her objections and any evidence for them to the source of her displeasure, *The World's Crisis*, not to J.N. Loughborough, a man who worshipped her. A few excerpts from her 24 August 1874 letter to him were first published in the 14 January 1932 *Review and Herald*, fifty-seven years after she wrote it. But the bulk of the letter remained off the record until 13 December 1977, when its twelve, double-spaced pages were provided Andrews University Seminary graduate student Rolf Poehler as part of manuscript release #592.
96. Ellen White, Manuscript 5a, 1850; July 1850 from East Hamilton, N.Y.
97. Ibid.
98. Ellen White, Manuscript 5, 1850; vision July 29, 1850.
99. Ellen White to "The Church in Brother Hasting's house," Letter 28, November 7, 1850.
100. James White to "Dear Brethren," 11 November 1851, quoted by Ron Graybill in "Glory! Glory! Glory!" *Adventist Review* (1 October 1987):13.
101. Ellen White to sons Edson and Willie, 7 December 1872, as quoted in Ronald D. Graybill, *The Power of Prophecy: Ellen G. White and the Women Religious Founders of the Nineteenth Century*, doctoral dissertation (Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD.:1983):96.
102. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
103. Ellen White to Bro. & Sis. Haskell, 10 October 1900.
104. *Bangor Whig and Courier*, 3 April 1845.
105. Wellcome, *Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
106. Wellcome, *History of the Second Advent Message*, 397.
107. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
108. Ellen White, *Testimonies* 1 (Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., Battle Creek, MI.:1885):31.
109. White, *Life Sketches* (1915):69,71.
110. White to Bates, 13 July 1847.
111. Arthur L. White, "Tongues in Early SDA History," *Review and Herald* (15 March 1973):5.
112. A.L. White, *ibid*; Graybill, *The Power of Prophecy*, 95,96.
113. Burdick, notarized statement, 26 September 1908.
114. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:77,78.; Otis Nichols, eight-page (pre-1860) statement (White Document File 733).
115. White to J.N. Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
116. White *Spiritual Gifts* 2:42,43.
117. J.N. Loughborough, *The Great Second Advent Movement* (Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., Wash., D.C.:1909):261,262,263.
118. White *Spiritual Gifts* 2:42,43.
119. Graybill, *The Power of Prophecy*,190.
120. O.R.L. Crosier, "Prophetic Day and Hour," *The Voice of Truth and Glad Tidings* (9 April 1845):15; James White, Letter to the editor, *The Day Star*, 6 (20 September 1845); *A Word to the Little Flock* (30 May 1847):22; Joseph Bates, *An Explanation of the Typical and Anti-typical Sanctuary* (1850):10,11.
121. Cook to Burr, *Morning Star*, 16 April 1845.
122. Burdick, *Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
123. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
124. James White, *Word to the Little Flock* (30 May 1847):22.
125. Wesley Ringer, *The Shut Door and the Sanctuary: Historical and Theological Problems*, (April 1982):53,54. This 128-page monograph was written at the request of the Southern California Conference. In it Ringer argues compellingly that the contemporary evidence does not support James White's claim that his wife had predicted the disappointment of 22 October 1845.
126. James White to Bro. Collins, 26 August 1846.
127. White, *Early Writings*, 64-67.
128. White, *Testimonies for the Church* 1:131,132.
129. *Bangor Whig and Courier*, 21 February 1845.
130. *Oxford Democrat*, 8 April 1845.
131. *Day-Star*, 6 September 1845, "Letter from Bro. White."
132. United States Federal Census, 1850.
133. *Bangor Whig and Courier*, 5 March 1845.
134. *Bangor Whig and Courier*, 19 February 1845.
135. Ibid.
136. M.C. Stowell Crawford to Ellen White, 9 October 1908.
137. White, *Life Sketches*, 89,90.
138. White, *Early Writings*, 257,258.
139. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:38.
140. A.L. White, *The Early Years*, 69.
141. Otis Nichols 8-page, pre-1860 statement; Otis Nichols to William Miller, 20 April 1846.
142. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:68.
143. White, *Life Sketches*, 86.
144. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:65.
145. Nichols to Miller, 20 April 1846.
146. A.L. White, *The Early Years*, 76.
147. Nichols to Miller, 20 April 1846.
148. A.L. White, *The Early Years*, 77.
149. *Daily Eastern Argus*, 28 April 1845.
150. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:38.
151. Nichols to Miller, 20 April 1846.
152. Megquier, *Crisis*, 1 July 1874.
153. White, *Spiritual Gifts* 2:38,50.
154. White to Bates, 13 July 1847.
155. White to Loughborough, 24 August 1874.
156. Ibid.
157. Jack W. Provonsa, "Was Ellen G. White a Fraud?" unpublished 25-page monograph (Loma Linda, CA.:1980).
158. "The Bible Conference of 1919," *Spectrum* 10 (May 1979):28.
159. White, *Life Sketches*, 196.